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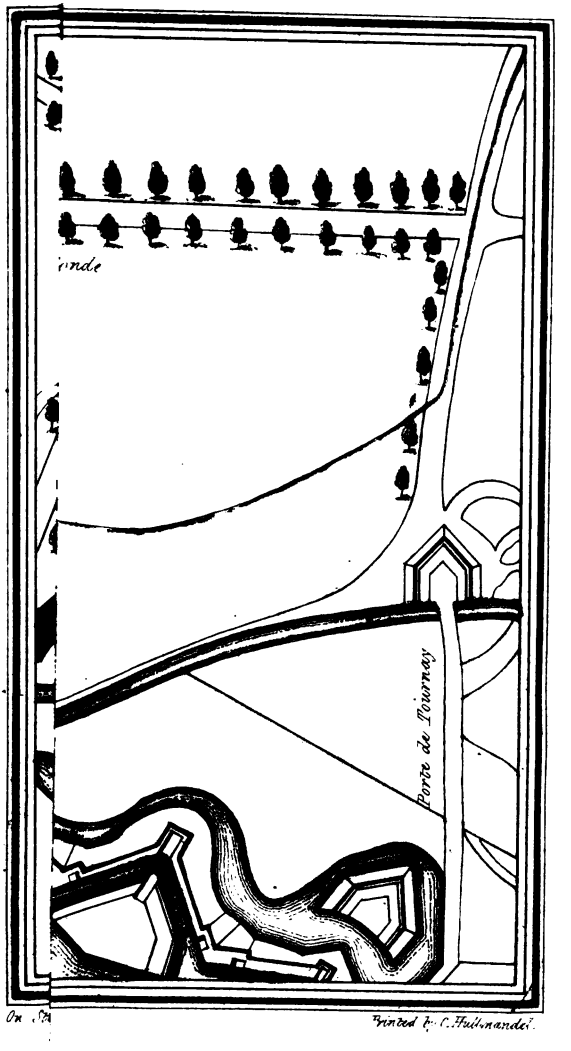

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Midshipman's Quarters

NARRATIVE

OF A

CAPTIVITY AND ADVENTURES

IN

FRANCE AND FLANDERS,

BETWEEN THE

YEARS 1803 AND 1809.

BY

CAPTAIN EDWARD BOYS, R.N.

LATE

A MIDSHIPMAN OF HIS MAJESTY'S SHIP PHŒBE.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR

RICHARD LONG, FINSBURY PLACE.

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TO

REAR ADMIRAL

SIR EDWARD W. C. R. OWEN, K.C.B. M.P.

SURVEYOR GENERAL OF THE ORDNANCE,

&c. &c. &c.

THIS LITTLE VOLUME,

CONTAINING

A PLAIN AND UNPRETENDING

NARRATIVE OF FACTS,

AS A TRIBUTE OF HIGH ESTEEM,

AND SINCERE REGARD,

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY

HIS OBLIGED FRIEND AND SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

THE following "Narrative" was written in the West Indies, in 1810, at the previous suggestion, and for the sole amusement, of my own family; since which, it has undergone occasional revision, both with a view of leaving to my children a memento of their father's juvenile adventures, and also of committing it to press, should more competent judges deem such a course not to savour of presumption.

The reader, who may run through this little volume, will not fail to observe, that it could not have been published at the time it was written, without risk of injury to those to whom I was indebted for protection; and when this cause ceased to operate, in consequence of the number of years which

had elapsed, I still delayed the publication, from the fear it might not be found worthy the attention of the public. At length, however, trusting in the indulgence so generally shown to one who is not an author by profession, and more especially to the liberality of my brother officers, I venture, late as it is, (but not without much diffidence) to publish this plain statement "of facts," requesting the candid reader to bear in mind, that I make no pretensions to literary merit, my sole object being to convey the simple truth in its simplest form.

NARRATIVE.

At the termination of the war, in the spring of 1802, I was paid off as a master's mate of the Royal Sovereign, bearing the flag of Vice Admiral Sir Henry Harvey, K.B. In June following, I joined the Phœbe frigate; in September, captain the Hon. T. B. Capel was appointed; we were sent to the Mediterranean, and there continued until the renewal of the war in 1803. In July, the Phœbe was ordered off Toulon, to watch the enemy in that port: on our way thither, when off Civita Vecchia, two privateers were seen from the mast head, it being then a dead calm; the boats, ably manned and well armed, were dispatched in chace, under the orders of the first Lieutenant Perkins, and after five hours' rowing, about ten P. M. came up with one of them; but from an unfortunate

medley of disastrous events, we were twice repulsed with the loss of eight men killed and wounded.

Having reached our station off Toulon, on the night of the 31st of July, two armed boats under the orders of Lieutenant Tickell, with one of which I was entrusted, were sent in shore for the purpose of capturing any vessel running along the coast, that he might judge worth the risk of attack; having gained an eligible situation, under the land, near Cape Cecie, we lay upon our oars until dawn of day, when two settées were discovered standing to the westward, with a light breeze, they were instantly boarded, and carried, without resistance; they proved to be from Genoa, bound to Marseilles, with fruit and sundry merchandize. On rejoining the Phœbe, the sails of the prizes were found to be in such a tattered state, that Captain Capel judged it proper to detain them two days in order to have them repaired, when I was appointed prize master to one, and a midshipman, named Murray, to the other, having with him an assistant bro-

ther officer, named Whitehurst. Our orders were to proceed the following day to Lord Nelson, then off the coast of Catalonia, and thence to Malta; unhappily for me it was otherwise ordained; for at break of day on the 4th of August, four frigates, viz. "La Corneille, (Commodore) Le Rhin, L'Uranie and La Thamise" were discovered about five miles astern; all sail was immediately crowded upon our little squadron, steering about S.S.W. with a moderate breeze from the W.N.W.; as the day broke, the Redbridge schooner hove in sight on the larboard bow upon the opposite tack, having a transport under her convoy, and, passing within hail of the Phœbe, soon after spoke me. The lieutenant recommended my tacking and following him; but as I saw that by so doing I should be running into the teeth of the enemy, and inevitably taken, in a quarter of an hour, I preferred executing my captain's orders, by keeping my station as long as I could: to this end we cut the long boat adrift, and began to lighten the vessel by throwing the cargo overboard, and setting every yard of can-

vass that could stand; but, notwithstanding all our efforts, the enemy was rapidly gaining both on myself and on the Phœbe, and escape for either appeared impossible.

Seeing the Redbridge persevere in endeavouring to cross them, it occurred to me that Captain Capel might probably have directed the lieutenant to take the prizes under his convoy, and stand to the northward, in order to create a diversion, and thereby separate the pursuing enemy; this idea was strengthened by soon after observing the weathermost open her fire upon the schooner, which immediately struck, and, together with the other settée, hove too. The time lost in exchanging the prisoners, indicating no very zealous anxiety to resume the chase, also tended to confirm my suspicion; hence, doubting whether I had not erred in neglecting the advice (for it did not amount to an order) of the lieutenant of the Redbridge, I determined on bearing up, in the hope of getting to leeward, and enticing one of the frigates after me. At this time I was about three miles on the weather bow, and the Phœbe

about four, a head, of the French squadron. Scarcely were the sails trimmed, and the impossibility of escape obvious, than I determined on running the vessel athwart hawse of the headmost, in the hope of doing some mischief, and thereby facilitating the escape of the Phœbe; but this design was frustrated by our own helmsman, who, being a Frenchman,* and alarmed at the enemy's threat to sink us, disobeyed my orders in the conning† of the vessel. Seeing her spring too, I ran aft, to the helm, but it was too late, our rigging just cleared the main chains of the frigate, which, to my utter astonishment, hove too, and sent a boat to take possession; thus, by a voluntary and unnecessary act, did the enemy execute that, which I had fondly hoped to effect, and which

* This man went by the name of John Powell, he belonged to the Phœbe's Sailmaker's Crew, was sent on board the Prize to repair the sails, and was to have been returned to the ship. I afterwards gave him a certificate of baptism for Plymouth, and passing himself as of Guernsey parents, he was never found out.

† Directing the steering.

was almost the only act that could afford consolation in so painful a situation; for, notwithstanding I was myself a prisoner, I could but indulge in feelings of triumph at seeing the Phœbe walk off in the face of a superior and much faster sailing foe. As the other frigates closed, they also hove too, thus allowing the Phœbe to make one of the most miraculous escapes that occurred during the war. In the mean time the corvette captured the transport. About half an hour was occupied in removing the prisoners and dispatching the prizes to Toulon: during which period, the Phœbe was manœuvring in defiance, firing guns and making signals as if communicating with a friendly force. The chace was renewed, and an officer ordered to the mast head to look out, who reported that he saw several large sail to windward; the signal "a fleet in sight," was immediately made to the commodore, and soon after the squadron bore up for Toulon; on approaching which, Admiral Gantheume, the commander in chief, by signal, ordered the chace to be resumed,

evidently disapproving of the return; but the Phœbe was then some distance to windward. Captain Capel, seeing the irresolution and want of energy in the French squadron, about four P. M. boldly bore down, fired at them, and hauled his wind again, as if desirous of enticing them off shore; between six and seven P. M. they gave up the chace, and again made sail for Toulon, followed by the Phœbe. It is impossible to say with what discretionary power the commodore was invested, but it was nevertheless certain, from the decided advantage the French squadron had in sailing, that if they had continued the chace in either instance, the Phœbe must have been taken, for there was no friendly ship of war within many leagues. During the night the squadron lay too off the mouth of the harbour, and when day dawned, again gave chace, which was continued all day, taking care not to reach too far off shore; in the evening they bore up and lay too as before. The 6th they again stood to sea, and returning, about sunset, anchored in Toulon

roads. The pleasurable feelings of curiosity which every seaman experiences on entering a port which he has never before visited, were absorbed in the recollection that I was a prisoner, cut off from my country and friends, at the breaking out of a war, when I had served nearly seven years, and had buoyed myself up with the hope that I was on the very eve of promotion; these reflections, together with the conviction that I was so guarded as to preclude a probability of escape, tended to cast a temporary gloom over my spirits, and render me indifferent to the beauties of the surrounding scenery. The following day we were separately examined before officers sent on board for the purpose, and our refusal to answer questions put to us, respecting the strength and situation of Lord Nelson, was construed into contempt, and so excited the rage of the captain of the Rhin, that he told us we were pirates; this novel information did not in the least disconcert us, for we suspected the ignorance of the man, and afterwards learnt he had been a

barber; indeed, the whole tenor of his conduct evinced the dreadful convulsion which society in France must have undergone during the revolution, for such an ignorant, low-bred fellow to have risen to the command of a frigate. When, however, it was explained to him that midshipmen in the British navy never had commissions, he resumed his composure, and, on my producing Captain Capel's written order, I was dismissed. Whitehurst and Murray underwent similar examinations, but with no better success. During the twenty-one days we were on board the Rhin, under quarantine, the Phœbe frequently hove in sight, and, as we were informed, made repeated proposals for an exchange of prisoners, but unfortunately, they were too well satisfied with such living proofs of their prowess in naval arms, to accede to them. We were occasionally permitted to take exercise in the quarantine ground, until the morning of the 26th of August, when Murray, Whitehurst, and myself, the master of the Transport and ninety men, were

landed about two miles to the westward of the town; thus separating us from the officers of the schooner, consisting of Lieutenant M'Kenzie of the Maidstone, passenger, and six midshipmen, (Lieutenant Lempriere, the commander of the schooner, having been drowned in the roads, by the upsetting of a boat). Our separation from these officers, was caused by our conduct at the mock court of inquiry; we were told that we did not deserve to be treated like our comrades, and therefore were sent with the men. On landing, we were received by a captain's guard of infantry, who very uncourteously pushed us indiscriminately into ranks, and, forming themselves in file on each side, waited only the order to march, which was soon announced by a brace of dismal drums at the head of the escort, previous notice being given, through the medium of the interpreter, that the first who dared to wander from the ranks, would be shot. It was really ludicrous to witness the parade of triumph evinced by our commanding officer, and the readiness

with which his every gesture was imitated by some of his obsequious subordinates, who liberally dealt out blows with the flat of swords upon the shoulders of any one, who, even from awkwardness, might incline out of the direct line of march. In this way we trudged along, with each a loaf of ammunition bread slung over the shoulder, and only four dollars (which Whitehurst happened to possess) amongst us; occasionally halting to rest, until about four P. M. when we were drummed in form through a village, and then retrograded, for the purpose of being drawn up in front of a large swinery, to witness the expulsion of pigs, sheep, and goats, to make room for us. In the course of an hour, the lieutenant gave us leave to dine in the village, attended by a sergeant, by which he incurred the displeasure of his brutal captain; we soon after returned to the place of confinement, where we remained smothered in dust and dirt, until the morning, when we were again mustered into ranks, and after receiving a black loaf and seven-pence halfpenny each,

as five days' pay, were drummed, as before, out of the village. Our march was through a rugged country, the scenery of which was very picturesque. The captain of the escort, generally keeping the interpreter by his side, occasionally (through him) entered into conversation with one or other of us; availing ourselves of a favourable opportunity, when apparently he was a little less morose than usual, we endeavoured to obtain permission to walk by ourselves, instead of being restricted to the ranks; but he was deaf to our request. We ceased to wonder that he should evince so little feeling for our situation, when he related story after story of the bloody deeds committed during the reign of terror, in which it seemed, by his own account, he had been a frequent and willing actor; he and the captain of the Rhin were, probably, fair specimens of the set of hardened miscreants which the revolution had produced, and served to show, that in those troublesome times, abandonment of principle and display of turpitude, no less than of talent, led the way to promotion and

rank. The third night we arrived at Aix, and were confined in what appeared to have been an old convent, in the yard of which, being permitted to range, we seized the opportunity of washing our linen, and were much pleased to learn, that we were no longer to be escorted by that inhuman offspring of tumult, who had had charge of us from Toulon. He resigned us to the care of a venerable old gentleman, whose first act of kindness was to inquire, in what manner we had been treated by his predecessor, and who seemed indignantly surprised that no distinction had been made between the officers and the men. The knowledge of this unmerited and unjust severity excited his warmest sympathy, and called forth the exercise of those nobler feelings, which seemed to flow from a natural benevolence of heart, for his kindness and attentions were unbounded; whilst his affability and cheerfulness made us almost forget we were prisoners. "Voyons soyez gais," observed this good old gentleman, "the day may come when you may think yourselves happy in having been

prisoners." Although I gave him full credit for his philosophy, and the benevolence which prompted the observation, and felt grateful for our change of treatment, yet the result proved him to be no prophet; for I have never had cause to rejoice at an event which kept me so many years back in the service; however, so it was, and I took advantage of my situation by endeavouring to learn something of the language, in occasional conversation with the interpreter; the next day's march brought us to a dirty village, where the church was our prison for the night. On the 1st of September, we reached Tarascon, and were locked up in the tower; before the old officer took leave, he ordered the jailor to place us in a comfortable room by ourselves, and treat us as officers, though not on parole, that being contrary to the order from Toulon; in the morning he took us for a walk through the town, and in the afternoon sent a boy with us up the river, where we enjoyed a refreshing bathe; after washing and drying our linen, we reluctantly returned to prison; this was

the first time since our capture that we had been without a guard, and might have easily decamped, had we been so inclined; but certainly no opportunity, however tempting, could have induced us to violate the frank and friendly confidence reposed in us by our philosophical veteran; in the evening he again visited us, and with much feeling, recommended us to the particular indulgence of his successor, who, for the sake of distinction, was dubbed *the fat captain.* Early the following day, we passed through the town of Beaucaire, and, arriving in the evening at Nismes, were marched to prison; but were soon permitted to go into the town, through the kind interference of some English gentlemen, here residing as "déténus."

The next morning we breakfasted with a Mr. Walker, at whose house we had the good fortune to meet Doctor Grey,* from whom we received the kindest attention; we dined with him on that day, and those who have the happiness of his acquain-

* Now Sir Thomas Grey, residing at Ramsgate.

tance, will best judge of the pleasure we experienced on that occasion; certainly his ravenous guests did ample justice to his genuine hospitality. During our sojourn at Nismes, the nationality of Englishmen was conspicuously shown forth in the assiduous attention of the "détenus" towards their captive countrymen; indeed, they considerably allayed the ennui and mortification of captivity, by confidently assuring us, that an exchange of prisoners had been arranged between the two governments, and that in six weeks we might rest satisfied of a happy return to the service of our country. In the full expectation of this desirable event, I availed myself of every opportunity, in the mean time, of acquiring some trifling knowledge of the French language. They also made a subscription for the men, which I distributed amongst them in equal portions.

About this time, Mr. Danderson, the master of the Transport, was kind enough to cash Whitehurst a draft for twenty pounds, by which means we fared much

better. Proceeding on our journey, in two days we reached Montpellier, and were delivered into the hands of the commandant, for the night, who ordered us to be confined in the citadel. This was in so ruinous a state, that we might have decamped with little difficulty, had we known where to go or how to act; the subject was mentioned to me, but my hope of an early exchange (in which the right of being included was then understood to be forfeited by an attempt to escape), our total ignorance of the country, of the means of embarking, and of the language, induced me to think it unadvisable. Could I have foreseen what followed, I should have decided differently; nevertheless, my services were offered, but no attempt was made.

From Montpellier we proceeded to Beziers, thence to Narbonne; through Carcassone, Castelnaudary, Ville Franche, and several villages, until we arrived at Toulouse, on the 12th of September, when we were again placed at the head of the ranks, and drummed in triumph to

the town hall. After remaining about an hour, surrounded by military and an immense populace, the guard was withdrawn, and we were desired to consider ourselves on parole; permission was given to take lodgings in the town, and we were further directed to apply for a passport, whenever we felt disposed to go beyond the suburbs.

The general, on being asked if our paroles were to be signed, replied, "No; a British officer values his honour too much, to render his signature necessary;" when this was repeated to us, it may easily be imagined with what patriotic importance the compliment to our national character was received; with what feelings of pride his Britannic Majesty's midshipmen resolved to merit the eulogium of the enemy. On being told we might retire, the crowd fell back, opening a lane with a degree of civility and politeness that somewhat surprised us: we strolled up the nearest street, for all were alike to us, not knowing where to go, or what to do. To those who have never quitted their own fire-

sides, our situation at this moment may seem to have been desolate enough:—without friends; without experience; without any knowledge of the language of those, amongst whom the fate of war had thrown us. But sailors are not prone to despondency; and the buoyancy of youthful spirits kept us from dwelling upon present difficulties, or anticipating future troubles. There was, at any rate, a novelty in our present circumstances, which excited a pleasurable sensation, peculiar to itself, heightened, in some measure, by the knowledge that we were no longer subject to the caprice and insult of a military upstart, but enjoying, at least, a partial ray of liberty. Scarcely had we reached a cross street, when, as gazing around in the perplexity of indecision which way to turn, a gentleman came up, and, addressing us in English, volunteered his services in seeking a lodging; after rambling about some time, as if begging an entrance at every door, we found ourselves in one of the bye lanes, and here we succeeded in hiring a room at nine livres per month; the furni-

ture of which consisted of a bed, not untenanted, three chairs and a table. In this hovel, Whitehurst, Murray, and myself existed three weeks; at the expiration of that period, our pay being augmented to twenty-five sols per day, we were enabled to dine at a "table-d' hôte," and get into a more comfortable lodging, with the additional luxury of a bed each.

Mr. Fitzsimons (the gentleman who procured us our first lodging) introduced me to a family of the name of Prevost, with whom he resided. It was from Mr. Fitzsimons that I learnt the first rudiments of the French language; but I was still more indebted to Mrs. Prevost, a most accomplished and pleasing lady, who took infinite pains to instruct me, and by whose flattering influence I was encouraged to apply so closely to my studies, that in two months I was able to make myself understood; my comrades were also studying French, and making rapid improvement; so that, stimulating each other to ardent exertion in our new pursuit, we seldom thought of amusements till the evening.

Being considered as military officers, we were allowed the privilege of going to the theatre upon paying four shillings and eight-pence per month; this was not only an agreeable, but a profitable lounge, and we seldom neglected to attend. On the arrival of the officers who had been taken in the Redbridge, several of them joined our table-d' hôte, and we mustered rather a large and merry party. With respect to society, I was more fortunate than my companions, as I frequently dined, and passed my evenings, at the Prevost's. In the beginning of October, I received a remittance from my father, by which our means were so materially increased, that we no longer confined ourselves to short commons, but indulged in comforts to which we had long been strangers.

During our stay in this once noble capital, we past some happy days, and being in continual expectation of an exchange of prisoners, were the more anxious to acquire the language, before orders arrived to march us to the coast. The seamen were not all so patient, for several of them

attempted to escape; one party of five, after marching and countermarching fourteen days, supposed they had reached the neighbourhood of the Pyrenees; when, to their utter surprise and consternation, they found themselves within a few miles of the town; thus situated, and being half starved, they despaired of getting away, and delivered themselves up. Notwithstanding this failure, several others made similar attempts, but I recollect only one individual who did not return to prison; and his success was owing to his having preserved his American passport, which he had obtained when afloat, to protect him from the impress. On the 2d of December, orders having arrived for our removal, I waited on Mrs. Prevost, to take leave; after expressing her sorrow at my departure, and the hopes she entertained of my return, she embraced me as tenderly as though I had been her own child. I left the house with gratitude and regret, joined my comrades, and, after a few necessary arrangements, bade a final adieu to Toulouse. The marching party

consisted of eleven, who, being now considered on parole, had no guard; being accompanied only by one gendarme to shew the road, and take the "feuille de route;" a cart was allowed, to carry the baggage. We proceeded at discretion during three days, dined and slept at the different inns, like independent gentlemen, and enjoyed all the luxuries our limited finances would afford. On our arrival at Auch, about forty miles west of Toulouse, we hired lodgings, in different parties; six of us took up our quarters in the house of a "cidevant" nobleman, who was particularly kind on all occasions. He frequently amused us with the relation of his adventures, during the horrid times of blood and rapine; also with accounts of his subsequent travels; dwelling particularly on those in England, where he had passed some very happy days in high life. He possessed all the distinguishing qualities of the gentleman, and had all the communicative intelligence of the learned traveller, without any of that "gasconade," that bombastic exaggeration, tending to

self exaltation, for which the generality of French travellers are so famed; indeed, his every act and expression, whether flowing from head or heart, evinced that nature had bestowed upon him her choicest gifts, in bountiful profusion. During our stay at Auch, we had unrestricted liberty, and could ramble about the country at pleasure. On the 11th of December, an order arrived from Paris to send us to Verdun, and we were to set out the following day. Our finances being reduced to a very low ebb, we consulted our truly noble friend, who, not enduring the thought of our travelling such a distance, in the depth of winter, with nothing more than soldiers' allowance, persuaded the bankers to lend me twenty pounds on a draft; this timely supply gave new vigour to our spirits, and enabled us to fortify ourselves against the inclemencies of the weather. At noon, we took leave of our worthy friend, and departed; and, arriving in the evening at Beaumont, we were very comfortably housed, yet strictly guarded. The next day, reaching Montauban, after

a tedious march, we were drawn up in line, in front of the town hall, and formally inspected by the commissary, who, with much apparent politeness, enticed us into a prison by a most artful piece of duplicity, intended, no doubt, to wound our feelings; he was, however, disappointed in his hopes of annoyance, for we could not refrain from a general burst of laughter at the simple manner in which we had been entrapped. On entering a room, which had been formed by the spade, we found the barred windows but a few feet above the surface of the water; it was only on one side that we had either light or air, and this attended by the refreshing vapours of the river, and the cooling dampness of the surrounding earth, oozing salt-petre from every pore. We requested to be allowed to see the commandant, but to no effect; soon after, a lieutenant was sent to visit us, with whom we expostulated on the impropriety and hardship of our situation, observing, that in all civilized countries, officers, who had become prisoners of war, were put upon parole,

and that during our travels in France, we had never, until now, experienced treatment which would have been tolerated only in the days of Robespierre. He was somewhat nettled at the remark, and told us, he was desired by the commandant, to say, that he was himself once a prisoner in England, and that, from having been confined in Dorchester castle, he had sworn to retaliate; that, exclusive of his oath, he had the most unlimited *confidence* in the British officers, but that he judged it prudent to have a little *security* also. This fellow, like his commissary, another of those "parvenus" sprung from the very dregs of the people, and actuated by pitiful motives of revenge, kept us immured in this most unhealthy hole, during the following day. On the morning of the 15th, we departed, with a different guard, and in the evening were comfortably billetted in a village. The next day, proceeding on our journey, we arrived, at a late hour, at Cahors. Thence we marched northwardly: nothing occurred worth notice, but the loss of the guards, who had

fallen asleep in drunkenness; we, however, marched on without them. On the 19th, we slept at Gourdon; on the 20th, at Martel; and on the 21st, after marching over rocks and hills, in a wretched country, broke suddenly upon a most beautiful view over an extensive and rich valley, in the centre of which rises the town of Brive. Scarcely had we sat down to dinner at this place, when we were surprised by the gendarmes, who, from a state of consternation on account of the apprehended loss of their prisoners, became as much elated, when they found we were all present. On the 22nd, notwithstanding the weather was stormy, we were obliged to proceed, but, by the consent of the guards, hired mules, and got that night into Uzerches, a distance of about thirty-five miles; the next day we reached Limoges, and were conducted to the door of the prison; but there making a firm stand, in spite of the threats of the colonel, succeeded in obtaining permission from the general, to be quartered in an inn. A strong guard of veterans was, however,

sent to surround the house. Here we remained the 24th; the 25th, when preparing to depart, a long bill was presented, with the expenses of the gendarmes included, and it was with much difficulty we could convince our host, that, not having invited them to guard us, we had too much urbanity to offer so gross an insult to the colonel, as to pay for his guests, and therefore desired that the demand might be made upon him; this so incensed these members of the legion of honour, that they swore it should cost us dear; however, nothing material occurred. Journeying on, and halting occasionally, as inclination urged, we ate our mournful Christmas dinner in a miserable village, where we stopped for the night. In this manner we trudged on, two days, and on the third, a dispute arose between the landlord and our commissariat department, in consequence of the nefarious impositions of the former, when the mayor interposed, and cast us, with costs.

During the dispute, I entered an adjoining bed room, and observing on the mantle

various little images in plaster of Paris, in the midst of which was the bust of the adored Buonaparte, and no one being near, I could not resist the temptation of placing it head downwards, in a vessel which was no ornament to a mantle piece, nor usually found there; the arrangement of the images I also altered, so as to make them appear ridiculing this misfortune of the "premier consul." In the midst of my amusement, the order of march was given, and I hurried out unseen. We journeyed on about six leagues with a morose set of gendarmes, who, on entering a public house in the evening, made private arrangements with the host to impose on the prisoners; in consequence of an attempt to frustrate this iniquitous design, we were enticed from the tavern, entrapped by an artifice similar to the one practised at Montauban, and locked up in an unfurnished house, with nothing but straw, and short commons. We, nevertheless, joked away the hours in good humour, preferring present inconvenience, to the more agreeable comforts of a tavern, at-

tended by imposition and insolence. Proceeding on our journey, we were occasionally lodged in a tavern, or a prison, at the caprice of the guard; who happily on the 29th, were superseded by a more rational set. These we instantly began to flatter, and to abuse their predecessors; a method of ingratiating oneself, and turning to account the proverbial vanity of such people of this country, generally successful, and it here had the desired effect. On our arrival at Argentan, I purchased of one of my companions an old horse for 12s. 6d.; this poor jaded animal afforded amusement for several days, till at length I sold him for 3s. 6d. We quitted this town on the 1st of January, 1804, and passing through a beautiful country, reached Chateauroux, and there remained the following day.

The gendarmes, whom flattery had so much influenced, now left us; and notwithstanding they recommended us to their successors, as "de braves gens," we experienced different treatment; they frequently spoke harshly and insolently,

hinting at the same time, that we had not conducted ourselves properly; this being unintelligible, and having often found on such occasions, a deportment bordering on "hauteur" to produce the best effects, with the "canaille," we scarcely noticed them. In the evening we entered a public house, and on passing through the kitchen, observed the entrance of an adjoining prison, and suspecting it was intended for our quarters, a feint of resistance was made; it was, however, a fruitless effort, and we were compelled to enter. In vain we remonstrated and assured them they would be punished for disobeying the order which had been shown to us by the late guard, from the general at Auch, relative to our treatment. They became excessively enraged, and, at length, one said, "You are in prison by a counter order lately received from Auch, for having put Buonaparte's head into a 'pot-de-chambre.'" A silent gaze of astonishment, was followed by sudden gusts of laughter, which so thundered through the prison, as to drown the voice of the incensed orator; and nothing

could be heard but "Buonaparte," and "Diable;" the louder he spoke, the more boisterous was our mirth, until, frantic with rage, he drew his sword, rushed forward, and thrust it through the grated hole in the door, stamped, and swore in such a foaming passion, that when the storm of derision was over, he could scarcely articulate:—

"Each passion dimm'd his face,
"Thrice changed with pale ire, envy, and despair."

It was sometime before we ceased laughing at this truly ridiculous event, for we had forgotten the boyish frolic alluded to, and had not the least idea that it could be thought of sufficient importance to cause an official report, and an order by a "courier de la republique," that we should be cast into prison. No sooner had the gendarmes retired, than the jailor supplied us with clean straw, and set his family cooking, so that we fared very well, in this otherwise miserable den. On the 4th, 5th, and 6th, we marched on, and, in default of prisons, were quartered in the

public houses. On the 7th, we arrived at Orleans, and were joined by Lieutenant Prater, of the second West India regiment, captured on his passage from Honduras to England.

The next day we proceeded to Pethivier. Here our fare was wretched enough; short commons, and a truss of straw, in a small tower, were our accommodation for the night. On the 11th, we journeyed on to Melun, where again, in the other extreme, we were lodged in a comfortable inn, and permitted to stroll about the town without the least interruption, and even without a gendarme. The 12th was a "jour de repos;" whether it was thought too great an honour for us to pass so near "la bonne ville de Paris," or not, I cannot say; but instead of taking the direct road to Verdun, the next day our course was shaped to the S. E. and we slept at Belleville; thence eastwardly, and dined in a village, where the gendarmes again attempted to make us pay for escort, but we had travelled too far to be such dupes. On our arrival at Troyes, the following

day, the guard was about to conduct us to prison, when we insisted upon halting at an inn, until the pleasure of the general should be known; finding they wavered at our firmness, we desired that one of the gendarmes should conduct two of us to his house, where we had an immediate interview; instead of receiving us with the contemptible pomp of a mushroom general, he immediately presented chairs, and, with the mild dignity of the accomplished gentleman, expressed his approbation of our request to be considered on parole, gave the necessary directions to the gendarme, and ordered him to retire. He then said, if we were desirous to remain in the town a few days, the permission should be granted; but, as our finances and inclination were not in unison, we declined his kind offer, with many thanks.

We returned to our friends, elated with the success of our mission; all participated in the pleasure, not merely from having escaped the filth and vermin of a prison, but also from its giving us a certain degree of consequence in the eyes of

the gendarmes, who afterwards became somewhat more respectful in their deportment. It may not be irrelevant here to insert a remark made at the time, that when we met with an officer of the "ancien règime," we were generally treated like gentlemen, but when under those sprung up from the revolutionary "canaille," known, in France, by the appellation of "enfans de terreur," we, on the contrary, met with insolence and severity.

We left Troyes, on the 16th, and halted, to breakfast in a village, when the remains of my twenty pounds were expended on a scanty meal. Lieutenant M'Kenzie, seeing that the reduced circumstances of our party now compelled us to keep aloof from the dinner table, most handsomely insisted that his remaining cash should be shared amongst us, so that by his liberality, we again fared very well. This was not the only instance of his kind interference in my behalf. He also had been harshly treated by the gendarmes; and, such was his utter detestation and abhorrence, at that time, of every thing French, that he

would not even study the language, lest it might tend to abate his determined hatred; but such feelings were not the natural production of his benevolent heart; they had been planted there by insolence and oppression, which his noble mind could scarcely endure: all who know him will unite in declaring him worthy of the compliment of the poet:—

"The patriot virtues
"That distend thy thought, spread on thy front,
"And in thy bosom glow."

The 19th, we halted at Chalons, on the Marne; the 20th, at St. Menehould; and, on the 21st, in spite of the very bad weather, reached the end of our journey—the long wished for Verdun. Upon being escorted to the citadel, certain regulations, as the conditions of my parole, were given to me for perusal. These I signed; permission was then given me to retire into the town, where I took lodgings suitable to my finances. I found about 400 English, and a constant influx for several days.

I shall not fatigue the reader with a repetition of those occurrences in Verdun

which have already appeared before the public, in various shapes, but confine myself to the leading features of the discipline of the depôt, and a few other particulars which may not be altogether uninteresting. But I shall first recall to mind, that on the renewal of hostilities, in 1803, Buonaparte detained all British subjects, between the ages of nine, and sixty, throughout the republican dominions, as an alleged act of retaliation for the seizure of French merchant vessels, on the immediate declaration of war; whether the blow preceded or followed the word, might be said to be nothing to a midshipman; but the fact proved, that it concerned him very materially, inasmuch as there was in consequence no exchange of prisoners. But, as it is equally unnecessary, and contrary to my inclination to give an opinion upon that political subject, I shall keep within the limits I have marked out for myself, and state, that the unfortunate Englishmen who had been thus captured, were denominated "détenus," without the

benefit of any stipend for their maintenance.

In the autumn of 1803, the several depôts of these "detenus," and of officers on parole, were concentrated in Verdun; the command of which was entrusted to a man named Wirion, who, during the revolution, under the auspices of Bernadotte, rose rapidly to the rank of general of gendarmerie, but was celebrated only as an adroit police officer. No sooner had this man entered upon his new office, than he established a system of "espionage," in imitation of the police of the whole republic, and thereby frequently acquired the earliest intimation of things which we fancied unknown to many of our friends. It was computed that he had no less than fifty principal informers, on whom he could depend, and each of these, one or more subordinate reporters, besides the eighty gendarmes, who, (one marèchal de logis excepted) may be added to that number; many of them also employed the "bourgeoiserie," and servants, to collect their gleanings.

Had Buonaparte carefully searched his army list, he could not have found two men less calculated to preside over a body of gentlemen, than the General Wirion and the Commandant Courçelles, the only distinction between them being, that to the depravity of an unprincipled rapacious tyrant, the latter added the vindictive malice and manners of a ruffian. The prolific genius of the former was continually on the rack to invent new means of accumulating wealth, alike indifferent to justice or honour; hence, as long as the prisoners could afford to gratify his avarice, he was always ready to grant any indulgence in his power. As erroneous notions have been entertained respecting the nature of parole in Verdun, it may not be amiss to state, that every officer, before he was released from the citadel, was obliged to sign a paper, promising, upon his honour, to conform to the regulations of the depôt, and not to escape, if permitted to reside in the town; as this promise was considered binding, all honourable young men who were determined to

depart, committed an offence, which would entail deprivation of parole; for it was an acknowledged rule, that the instant any one was put into a prison, or even taken into custody by armed men, (no matter from what cause), parole ceased. Various permissions, such as ranging six miles from the town, living in the country, and a few others, were after indulgencies, not contained in the conditions of parole, but frequently obtained by the intervention of a "douceur." The principal regulations were as follows: signing in a book at the "appel," according to rank, viz. captains in the navy, and field officers, once a month, lieutenants, every five days, midshipmen and others, twice a day, (thus calculating the word of a midshipman as equal only to one sixtieth part of that of a field officer); the neglect of this regulation was atoned for by the payment of two shillings and sixpence each time. The returning into town whenever the gun was fired, this being the signal of desertion, and also every evening at sunset, previous to the shutting of the gates. Our place

of abode was recorded in the books, and we were, therefore, obliged to give notice whenever we thought proper to remove.

To the commissioned officers the privilege was accorded by the British government of drawing quarterly bills for their pay. Buonaparte gave express orders that English bills should not be negotiated; this was acted upon for a time, during which the officers lived on French allowance: but afterwards, they got their bills cashed, at a discount of twenty-five per cent. Midshipmen received, every month, from the senior officer, half of their pay, but subject to a diminution of from ten to twenty-five per cent. Besides the above, a monthly allowance was received from the French government, as follows:—

	£.	s.	d.
Colonels and post captains	4	0	0
Majors and commanders	3	0	0
Captains in the army, and lieutenants in the navy	2	0	0
Lieutenants in the army, clergymen, and pursers	1	10	0
Midshipmen, ensigns, warrant officers, and masters of merchant vessels . .	1	5	0

The "detenus," holding military rank, received the same pay as prisoners of war, but the civilians nothing. The needy civilians, however, received from the managers of the patriotic fund, something every month, proportionate to their families; so that after the first year or two, there were but very few who suffered, except from their own misconduct.

There were well-regulated public schools established at the expense of the above fund, at all the principal depôts; and at Verdun there were two, one of which was for young gentlemen. These schools proved of infinite benefit; since, by means of them, not only were the boys trained up to industrious habits, but many of the steady seamen, learned to read and write, and also acquired a considerable knowledge of the principles of navigation. These, in turn, not unfrequently became tutors to others; such pursuits afforded an amusing occupation to many, and considerably diminished the irksomeness of hours, which must otherwise have been intolerably tedious and hateful. From

the incongruous mixture of all ranks and fortunes, in Verdun, there arose a diversity of humour and eccentricity, from which, frequent quarrelling and duelling might have been expected; but, considering that there were assembled, under the most distressing circumstances, about one thousand persons of all pursuits, devoid of even a hope of restoration to liberty, which might be supposed to sour the temper, duels but seldom occurred: not more than three or four proved fatal during the eleven years; and those which took place, appeared to proceed more from fashionable compulsion, than from any revengeful desire of reparation; the cause of almost every quarrel could be traced to gambling, wine, or women. There was, however, one duel worth mentioning; two mids, both under fourteen years of age, were found shooting at each other across a table, in their lodging, and nothing but the bursting open the door, and forcibly taking their pistols from them, put an end to the combat. Amongst the various allurements to iniquity, the gambling table,

otherwise termed "hell," was the most notorious, because sanctioned as legal, and regularly attended by a body of gendarmes, to maintain order; for which, General Wirion levied a fine of £100 per month, although he was one of the proprietors of the funds, which amounted to about £2000. The principal games were, "rouge et noire," and "roulette." The Satan of this gang of robbers, made himself acquainted with the affairs of almost every one in the depôt, and well knew to whom he could lend money with safety; he was constantly on the watch to ensnare the unwary and inebriated, which practice had taught him to do, under the specious mask of friendship, without creating suspicion. I cannot refrain from reciting an awful instance of the serious consequences resulting from a young man becoming his own master too early in life, and placing too much confidence in his own powers, to withstand the snares of temptation, in the society of the profligate. An unfortunate young man, in order to while away the tedious hours, after a party, was en-

ticed into this sink of iniquity, when he was tempted to throw on the table a half crown; he won, and repeated the experiment several evenings successfully, till at length he lost. The manager immediately offered him a "rouleau" of fifty pounds, which, in the heat of play, he thoughtlessly accepted, and lost. He then drew a bill on his agent, which Captain Brenton* endorsed, this he also lost; he drew two others, which met with the same fate; and the next morning he was found dead in his bed, with his limbs much distorted, and his fingers buried in his sides. On his table was found an empty laudanum bottle, and scraps of paper whereon he had been practising the signature of Captain Brenton. On inquiry, it was found that he had forged that officer's name to the two last bills. Thus did a once respectable young man meet a most dreadful and disgraceful end, from being exposed, at too early a period in life, to the temptation of gambling. Another cir-

* Now Sir Jahleel Brenton.

cumstance also occurred, the atrocity of which was somewhat tinged with the ludicrous. A clerk, named Chambers, losing his monthly pay, which was his all, at the gambling table, begged to borrow of the managers; but they knew his history too well to lend without security, and therefore demanded something in pawn;—"I have nothing to give," replied the youth, "but my ears,"—"Well," said one of the witty demons, "let us have them," the youth immediately took out of his pocket a knife, and actually cut off all the fleshy part of one of his ears, and threw it on the table, to the astonishment of the admiring gamesters; he received his two dollars, and gambled on. When this circumstance was reported to the senior officer, the hero was sent to Bitche. These were not the only instances of the pernicious effects of public gambling; some were led on from one vice to another, until totally ruined; while others, in despair, destroyed themselves by drinking, and other debaucheries. The town was not purified of its grand sources of

corruption, until Buonaparte, in 1806, abolished the tables. As a proof that these swindling managers visited Verdun solely to defraud the English, the following notice was placed upon the door of the gaming house :—"This bank is established for the accommodation of the English; all Frenchmen are forbidden to play." When such was the unblushing avowal, one cannot be surprised at the number of atrocities, peculations, and extortions, of those in authority. I have taken some trouble in making the subjoined calculations, for the perfect accuracy of which it would be impossible to vouch, from the difficulty of ascertaining the facts; but, judging from what was made public, I shall be very near the truth when I lay the robberies committed by the military authorities on the English, at about £30,000; to say nothing of those by the civil power, nor of the extortions of Jews, money dealers, and the "bourgeoiserie" in general; for the English appeared fair game for all, and he that could rob them most, was the most envied. But not having so wide a

field wherein to exercise this peculiar talent, no one could cope with the gallant general, as will be seen by part of the following outline :—

FINES LEVIED ON THE PRISONERS.

	£	s.	d.
For missing the "appels," 2s. 6d. each, and permission to sign the books at your lodgings, yielding about £50 per month, for three years	1800	0	0
Doctor's certificate, to avoid regulations, £10 per month, for five years .	600	0	0
Sale of passports to go out of town; issued about 2000 in seven years, losses, &c.....	250	0	0
For going out of town on horse back, or in carriage, 100 at 5s.	25	0	0
Permission to reside in the country, say average six for six years, at 10s. per month	216	0	0
Tax on four clubs, £1 5s. per month each, for six years	360	0	0
Races, exclusive of private robberies ..	180	0	0
Permission for servants to return to Verdun, at £12 each, four a year for six years	288	0	0
Permission for "déténus" to return to Verdun, from Valenciennes	400	0	0
Carried forward....	£4119	0	0

Brought forward	£4119	0	0
Gambling-houses, £100 per month, for three years	3600	0	0
Difference between the franc and livre tournois in Wirion's time £720; in Courçelles's £240	960	0	0
Permission for masters of vessels and others to return to Verdun, during seven years	420	0	0
Stoppages of pay, for pretended dilapidations	520	0	0
Defraying expenses of re-capture when attempting escape	300	0	0
Masters of merchantmen, permitted to reside in town, at 4s. each per month, part only collected £80			
Ditto, on another occasion, 500 at 7s. 6d. each 187			
	267	0	0
Commandant Courçelles's wine, and other robberies, not mentioned ...	1000	0	0
Courçelles's son, the jailor's, robberies .	150	0	0
Corporal Latreille's confession of £100, for two years	1000	0	0
Marèchal de Logis Bouillé, £150 per annum, for five years	750	0	0
Lieutenant Massin, £100 per annum, for two years	200	0	0
Carried forward	£13286	0	0

Brought forward . . .	£13286	0	0
Licences for various privileges	300	0	0
Lieutenant Demanget £150, for four years	600	0	0
One-third of 1800 prisoners at Valenciennes were permitted to work in town, on paying 10 sols a-day for one year, producing £3912 : 10s.; then 5 sols for one year £1965 : 5s. .	5868	15	0
	£20054	15	0
Calculating the robberies at the ten other depôts, each only at one-twentieth of that sum, amounts to	10027	7	6
	£30082	2	6

Nor need the reader be sceptical upon this enormous amount: a highly esteemed friend has submitted my calculation of the separate items to a very distinguished officer, whose situation rendered him fully competent to judge; his opinion is, that it is rather under, than over, the mark; though such calculations, from their very nature, cannot be strictly accurate.

I could, however, adduce a multitude of facts in corroboration of their probable accuracy, but when the fate of those in

authority over the prisoners is known, I trust all doubt on the subject will vanish. But the following circumstance may first be noticed, as a specimen of the gallant general's delicacy.

After Sir Jahleel had been visiting the depôts, General Wirion told him, that, as an additional duty had devolved upon the gendarmes, in consequence of one of their companions being on duty with him, he (the general) would be glad if Sir Jahleel would make them a present; he requested time to consider it, and soon after returned, armed with a golden "douceur;" when he told the general, that as he had travelled officially, at the expense of his own government, he must request a receipt as a voucher for this portion of his account. The general eyed him with a most satanic grin, and replied, that in consideration of the kindness he had shown to his attendant gendarme, he would not allow him to receive any thing.

I do not intend to sully these pages with a recital of the separate atrocities of these Verdun worthies: I shall briefly

insert a list of those who committed suicide, or were exposed by martial justice; in the hope their fate may prove a warning to future commandants, and a safeguard to the unfortunate.

WIRION—A general, and inspector-general of the Imperial gendarmerie, officer of the legion of honour, and commander-in-chief of the prisoners of war; *shot himself.*

COURÇELLES—Colonel and commandant of Verdun, and of the department of the Meuse, officer of the legion of honour; *dismissed from the army.*

DEMANGET—Lieutenant of gendarmerie, member of the legion of honour; *dismissed from the army.*

MASSIN—Lieutenant of gendarmerie, member of the legion of honour; *shot himself.*

BOUILLE—Maréchal de logis of gendarmerie, paymaster, and member of the legion of honour; *reduced to the ranks.*

NAME FORGOTTEN—Lieutenant of gendarmerie at Sarre Louis; *shot himself.*

NAME UNKNOWN—A colonel at Montmedy, member of the legion of honour; *condemned to the gallies.*

MUNDEVELLARS—Captain in the army, aide-de-camp to General Wirion, member of the legion of honour; *dismissed the army.*

NAME FORGOTTEN—Aide-de-camp to General Wirion, member of the legion of honour; *dismissed the army.*

Besides these honourable members so disgraced, many others narrowly escaped, and a long list of insignificant delinquents, might be added, whose rogueries are not comprised in the foregoing calculations.

Having thus noticed some of the most notorious characters, most of whom had sprung from the revolution, I now turn from this painful detail, to bring forth characters, as truly honourable as generous, whose actions indicated the strictest sense of duty, united with feelings, the most refined, and which could only flow from innate benevolence—from a " veritable grandeur d'âme:" such indeed were the noble minded De Beauchêne, De Meulan, Du Croix Aubert, and a few others; this I do with the greater satisfaction, not only because the system they adopted proved the national feeling of the prisoners to have been in accordance with those venerated soldiers, but also to show, how very little the then French ministers were capable of appreciating true greatness; or why

did the government refuse permission to the prisoners, to erect a monument to the memory of the Baron de Beauchêne. For this purpose they had entered into a subscription, little suspecting that jealousy and hatred would have been carried to such lengths, as to have frustrated a design which would have been a proud memorial of the pre-eminent virtues of the individual, and equally demonstrative of the magnanimity of both nations. It may not be improper here to add, that this baron was said to be the very grenadier who warded off the the dagger aimed at Buonaparte, by one of the council of five hundred, when he entered the hall of St. Cloud's, to dissolve that assembly. It was to this circumstance, that he was indebted for his barony, and well did he deserve it. Some of these events, however, occurred after my time, therefore cannot be said to belong to this "Narrative;" but as they may not appear altogether undeserving of notice, the reader I trust, will pardon the digression, and return with me to the period of Wirion's administration.

Notwithstanding that during the first five years of the war, escapes had frequently taken place, yet of about one thousand prisoners, I recollect but three who really violated parole, and it would have been well for British honour, had an exchange taken place at that period; but as I would be the last to cast a stone at those who differed from me in opinion, I shall merely observe, that Buonaparte caused an indiscriminate list of all who escaped, to be published, representing them as having broken parole, in which list I had the honour to be included; but of the truth or falsity of this accusation, I leave the reader to judge by the sequel.

With respect to the personal treatment of the prisoners in Verdun (setting aside extortion), every candid mind will confess that it was generally apportioned to individual desert, and if occasional acts of oppression occurred, they were exceptions emanating from the petty malice of vulgar minds, unaccustomed to exercise authority, rather than the result of systematic dis-

cipline, of which the following fact, is an evidence:—

Four of us were rambling about the country, with a pointer and silken net, catching quails, when the gun was fired. On our return, in passing through the village of Tierville, we were surprised by two gendarmes, one of whom instantly dismounted, and seized me, uttering the most blasphemous epithets; he tied my elbows behind me, then slipping a noose round my bare neck, triced me up to the holsters of his saddle, remounted, and returned with his prize to town, exulting in his cowardly triumph, and pouring forth vollies of vulgar abuse, every now and then tightening the cord, so as to keep me trotting upon the very extremity of the toes, to obtain relief, then again loosening it, as occasional guttural symptoms of strangulation seemed to indicate necessity. Vain would be the attempt to convey an adequate idea of the impotent rage then boiling within me, at the insult offered to my juvenile dignity, whilst a determined haughtiness dis-

dained to betray the slightest indication of submission or complaint. My companions were secured round the middle, with the utmost violence and brutality; thus we were conducted to town, and when delivered over to the proper authorities, and interrogated, were released. The next morning, I waited on the senior officer, Captain Woodruff, who, with a promptitude which did honour to his feelings, and indignation worthy of a British officer, immediately represented the fact to General Wirion, who assured him the gendarmes should be ordered into solitary confinement.

It was known that General Wirion had made repeated applications to the minister of war, to remove the depôt to Mentz; but not succeeding, he contented himself with reducing it, as being the only way in which he could vent his spleen against the inhabitants, with whom he had long been at variance. In furtherance of these views, he was on the watch to prevent an accumulation of prisoners, and no longer allowed any, newly arrived, to remain in the

town, except those, who from their rank, were entitled to it. He also now punished most offences, with banishment to Bitche, or other depôts; although it would at first sight appear, that he was thereby depriving himself of new subjects, upon whom he could more easily practice his "escroqueries," yet the return to head-quarters always furnished an excuse for exacting fifty crowns, under pretence of defraying the expenses of escort. Things were going on in this manner, when a circumstance occurred, which gave a turn to our destiny, and eventually caused our removal from this scene of dissipation, extortion, roguery, and vice. In July, 1808, three midshipmen, (I blush to state it,) were taken in the very act of violating parole: this afforded Wirion an opportunity of representing the whole class, to the minister of war, as contumacious and refractory. He further assured his Excellency, that nothing but extreme rigour and close confinement, could insure the persons of these "tres mauvais sujets," and that Verdun was inadequate to their security. To the

joy of some few, besides the peculating general, the result was an order for the whole class to be removed, and on the 7th of August, on going to the afternoon "appel," we were arrested, to the number of one hundred and forty-two, and sent to the citadel. Although we felt somewhat disconcerted at this sudden and unexpected movement, the natives were still more alarmed. It was natural to suppose, that among so large a number, there were some few in arrears with the "bourgoiserie," who flocked to the gates of the citadel to obtain, if possible, payment, or some security; and it is difficult to say, whether they were more enraged against the general, or against the poor unfortunate mids, who were deprived of all means of making any arrangements, by an order of non-intercourse, which was strictly enforced.

The previous occurrence of similar events, though on a minor scale as to numbers, warned us to prepare for an early departure, but not a word to that effect escaped the commanding-officer, until late at night. Besides the usual inmates of St. Vannes,

that convent was now crammed with such motley groups of gamblers quarrelling, debtors exulting, and Romeos despairing, that the scene was truly entertaining; particularly to those who, having nothing to regret, were looking forward for an opportunity of proving, that parole alone was the bond which had enchained them for so many years. We were all indiscriminately huddled together in the different apartments of the convent, upon the planks, for the night, and at dawn of day, the drum summoned us to muster. All those who were to depart, were drawn up in two ranks; one of seventy-three, destined for Valenciennes and Givet, the other of sixty-nine, (most of whom were masters of merchant vessels), destined for Sarre Louis and other depôts, to the eastward. The northern expedition being ready, we were placed two by two, upon bundles of straw, in five waggons, and set out, escorted by the greater part of the horse gendarmerie of the district, aided by infantry. No sooner had we cleared the suburbs, than they assumed a more regular order; four

horse gendarmes forming the van, and four the rear-guard; one on each side of every waggon, and twenty foot soldiers in files, with others in each carriage, made up the escort, the commander bringing up the rear upon his black charger. Whenever the road passed by a wood, which frequently occurred, we halted, to give the infantry time to occupy its skirts; two gendarmes on each side were posted midway, whilst the rest occasionally displayed their pistols, somewhat ostentatiously, by way of intimidation. I have been thus minute in detailing the strength and manner of the escort, not only to contrast it with similar detachments in England, where twice the number of French prisoners, with infinitely greater facilities of escape, might be safely entrusted to the care of a serjeant's guard; but also to show how fully persuaded Wirion was, that some of us would make the attempt. My most intimate friend and brother mid, Moyses, was of the party, and we had agreed to avail ourselves of the first opportunity to decamp; this, however, appeared almost

hopeless, if there should prove no relaxation in the system they had adopted. In the evening, we arrived at Stenay, having travelled about twenty miles. Upon halting, we were mustered in two divisions, and shut up in two public-houses; one division, in the lower part of the town, to which the younger and least suspicious were conducted; the other, in a building by itself on the road-side; particular care was taken to surround both houses, besides placing sentinels at the doors, and in the rooms, so that nothing could be done without considerable danger of discovery. Moyses and myself, nevertheless, continued to make several preparations; by pretending fatigue, we obtained leave to go to bed, and were alone for some time, although repeatedly visited by the gendarmes, who, when dinner was announced, were kept in good humour, by being invited to partake of it. We endeavoured to tempt them to a free use of the bottle, but French soldiers are not generally addicted to the destructive vice of drunkenness. Towards nine P.M. the party lay down on the floor

to rest. Moyses and I took our stations in a corner by the window, under which a sentinel was placed, whose turnings were to be watched about eleven, and when his back should be towards the window, Wetherly, (a brother mid), was to lower us down with towels tied together; if discovered, the sentinel was to be instantly knocked down; we were to make for the river, distant only a few hundred yards, swim across, and gain the woods: in case of success thus far, it was our intention to have proceeded to those in the vicinity of Verdun, and there wait the assistance of a friend, who was to furnish us with the necessaries for travelling through Germany, to the gulph of Venice.

About ten, the guard was relieved, and we were ordered into a large lighted room, there to lie on the floor, with the gendarmes forming nearly a circle around us, the windows barred in, and doors bolted. This unexpected precaution totally frustrated our plans; at day light we were again assembled in the waggons, and continued our journey, escorted as before.

Nothing particular attracted our attention, our thoughts being chiefly occupied in meditating plans of escape, as circumstances might favour.

" Hope springs eternal in the human breast."

And so actively alive were we to every dawn which beamed in the imagination, that each wood, each copse, which rose to view as we advanced, we fancied invited us to its protection. It was our intention to take the first opportunity, in passing a wood, through which our road sometimes led, to leap from the waggon, and trust to our heels, and its shelter, for security. To this end, we had taken our station in the front of one, with our knapsacks (containing a few articles necessary for a march,) on our backs. On approaching a wood, a gendarme observed, with a very significant expression of countenance :— " Messieurs, il me semble que vous vous trouverez plus à votre aise sans l'havresac au dos." It was evident from this observation, that our purpose was suspected, and that we were narrowly watched. On

gaining a hill, we gradually opened upon a rich plain, watered by the Meuse, on the borders of which, stands the town of Sedan, having a citadel, with ramparts in a most dilapidated state, which we viewed with secret pleasure, for there appeared but little difficulty in getting clear of the town, if we could but evade the vigilance of the guard, and understanding, that here our quarters for the night had been ordered, we were the more elated. Our march into the town was attended by a numerous rabble of ragged wonderers, and instead of being conducted to prison, as was expected, we were halted at a public-house; on reconnoitring the premises, a closet window was discovered, through which we could get upon the roof, and by the aid of a line, let ourselves down into the river, and swim over. Scarcely were our arrangements made, when we were surprised by the word to muster, again ordered into the waggons, and proceeded on our journey. We were not, however, less firm in the determination to avail ourselves of the first opportunity of ma-

king an attempt at liberty; but the catlike vigilance of the guard, seemed to render escape totally impracticable. On reaching Meziers, about eight P.M., we were received at the gates by a strong reinforcement of foot soldiers, and but for the precaution of forming double files on each side, might have had an opportunity of mingling with the mob assembled in the streets. They however lodged us safely in the prison, and when secured by bars and bolts, the jailor informed us the morrow would be a "jour de repos:" nothing could be done that night; some, in consideration of a "douceur," were permitted to occupy the jailor's private apartment. In the morning, we had the range of the prison, and discovered that the only way by which we could possibly escape, was by scaling the wall of the yard, which was about twenty feet in height; this however could not be done without a ladder, a grapnel and line, or the assistance of three or four to stand against the wall upon each other's shoulders. Moyses and myself, were, nevertheless determined to run any risk,

knowing we were to be separated the next day, and there being no one of our party in whom I had so much confidence as my friend; indeed, I felt convinced, that if the night passed without success, I should be doomed to wander alone through dark and desolate tracts, in dreary woods, hunted by all, for I was resolutely bent upon liberty. Parole had, hitherto, tended to reconcile me to captivity, but being now deprived of that honourable confidence, and feeling my pride wounded, at the oppressive act of punishing the innocent for the guilty, no obstacle could avert my intention of finally executing, what I now felt a duty; and it was cheering to find, that in these feelings, my friend most cordially participated. His intense anxiety in watching, his firm and resolute demeanour, together with his readiness in finding a remedy for every new obstacle as it arose, not only excited in each, new vigour, but evinced the ardour with which he would have rushed into every danger, if it afforded but a hope of success. Having arranged our plans; in order to avoid whispering, it was

determined, that only one should be intrusted with the secret, until the hour of trial; then, if appearances augured well, others were to be requested to assist. In the afternoon we were mustered, and separated into two divisions, one bound to Valenciennes, the other to Givet. About nine, in order to reconnoitre, we obtained permission to go into the yard, whither we were attended by a guard, but finding there, two large dogs running loose, escape was impossible. We felt severely the disappointment of this last hope of decamping together. The jailor, in a jocose way, inquired if the dogs were asleep; he was not, however, so austere, as some of his profession, for although he well knew the use of a map, he hesitated not to sell us one, apparently indifferent to our escape, provided it did not take place from his custody. We lay ourselves down to rest, encouraged by mutual consolation, when each felt determined, and hoped for the first opportunity of proving the sincerity of a friendship, formed and matured in adversity. In the morning the Givet divi-

sion, being mustered in the waggons, departed; and I was separated from my friend. The party for Valenciennes soon after followed, with a reduced escort, who observed the usual precautions. Being now left to my own reflections,—without plunging headlong into extremes, I resolved, should a favourable opportunity offer, upon following up the former plan—jumping out of the the waggon, and bolting into a wood; but the unabated vigilance of the guard rendered it impossible. In the evening we arrived at Hirson, and the following day at Avesnes. Here I was permitted to go to the military hospital, under an escort, to visit some English seamen, who had been wounded in endeavouring to escape from Arras, and gave them a subscription raised amongst ourselves. This day, the guard being relieved, we were entrusted to the care of a "Marèchal de logis," who, entertaining the most liberal opinions of the character of British officers, immediately placed us on parole, and took us to an inn, where we slept. In the morning he selected eight, of whom I was

one, and gave us permission to take the diligence, to Valenciennes; adding—"Gentlemen, I rely upon your honour." Now, severity would have been more acceptable than this act of politic kindness; but to have declined the offer, would have exposed my intentions, and drawn upon me the accumulated vigilance of the whole guard. This method evinced the impolicy of harsh measures, and insured the safety of all those worth securing; for the germ of honour buds in the spring of our days; and if, at that epoch, an officer violates her principles, it were better for him that he were never after intrusted with the performance of any act, in which his own immediate interest might clash with his country's honour. We set out in the diligence, with one gendarme, the mere formality of a guard, and passing through a village met four English seamen, with scarcely a rag to cover them, strongly guarded, chained to each other by the neck, and handcuffed. They told us, that having escaped from Arras, they had gained the coast, seized a vessel, and put to sea.

After beating about for several days in a gale of wind, and splitting all their sails, they were blown back, wrecked on the coast, and, on being retaken, were shamefully treated by the gendarmes. We made a subscription for them, and the poor fellows with hearts of oak, not to be subdued, gave us three cheers, adding—" Never mind, gentlemen, we'll catch 'em again at Trafalgar, some of these days." Passing through Quesnoy and Landrecy, we arrived at Valenciennes, about three P.M. August the 17th, 1808. Being soon after joined by the rest of the party, we were conducted with great form to the citadel; there to take up our abode with about fourteen hundred men, who occupied the barracks. A small house, divided into six apartments, each containing three or four beds, was, however, appropriated to the mids; here it was intended we should exist during the war, and no distinction whatever was to be made between us " tres mauvais sujets," and the seamen, except the permission of walking on the rampart fronting the town. I was not long in

this enviable situation, before I began to reconnoitre, in order to form plans of escape. That part of the citadel in which the men were allowed to walk, and which might be termed their playground, occupied about an acre; in this confined spot fourteen hundred men were mustered, three times a day, and no one permitted to go out, but under escort.*

On the arrival of the mids, the number of sentinels was considerably augmented, and strict orders issued to watch them. From the citadel, escape appeared impossible, it being surrounded with ditches, containing about six feet of mud, on the surface of which was not more than a foot of water: so that swimming was deemed

* It had been the custom for about two years, to allow one-third of the whole, to go into the town to work, on condition of each paying ten sols per day to the commandant. Fearing this disgraceful practice might some time be exposed, he reduced it one half, till, at length, it was entirely abolished by the pretended discovery of the government, who superseded him in this lucrative command, after having permitted him to fill his coffers with nearly seven thousand pounds.

impracticable. In this part of the fortress, which the prisoners termed the lower citadel, there are two gates—the northern, leading to the upper citadel, and the southern, to the town: at each, was a strong guard. Through the western rampart is a sally-port, which leads into an outwork, thence into a garden, forming a triangle of about half an acre, at the extreme point of which, the Escant branches off in two streams, the canal passing between the citadel and ravelin. Through this sally-port it was my intention to make an attempt, that appearing the weakest point. I meant to swim across the river, and take my clothes in an umbrella prepared for the occasion. I once tried the efficacy of this plan before many people at Verdun, which drew upon me the displeasure of the police, attended by an order not to repeat my experiments. Some few days elapsed before I ventured to communicate my intentions to any one, when I broached the subject to a brother mid, named Ricketts, who readily entered into my views, and was willing to assist me

in any way, but from the most honourable motives, declined joining. From the difficulty of getting out of the fort without aid, I hesitated at going alone, and mentioned it to a messmate, named Cadell, who also declined; I then sounded several other midshipmen without success. In this state of suspense, day after day elapsed, till the 4th of September, when I applied to one whose name was Hunter, he approved of my plans, and appeared gratified that I had selected him as a companion. Shortly after, it was agreed, that we should start on the 14th, intending, by means of picklocks, to get through the sally-port; and I was the more sanguine, from the circumstance of there being no sentinel at that door. At length, the 14th arrived, every thing wearing a favourable aspect, the hour of ten was appointed for the attempt. About four P.M. Hunter surprised me, by signifying his determination to postpone it until the spring, as, from the season of the year, he foresaw innumerable difficulties, and deemed success impossible.

In this distress, I became almost frantic, for from so untimely and unexpected a secession, I doubted in whom to confide.

My brother officers getting intimation of my intentions, whispered it about from one to the other, till it became a topic of general conversation; at length, it reached the ears of the police, and, in consequence of this, I was so closely watched, that all my prospects, for the present, were blasted. The only way to remove these suspicions, was perfect tranquillity for some time; and to divert the attention of the public, I sent to Verdun for my clothes and dogs, which I had left there, to avoid incumbrance on the road to Valenciennes. I should not neglect to mention, that a sentinel was now placed at the before-mentioned sally-port, and stricter orders issued throughout the depôt. The midshipmen began to manifest much impatience at the continuance of their "durance vile," and, after several fruitless applications to the commandant, drew up a letter to the minister of war, requesting restoration to parole: one sentence of which insured a flat denial, as it

plainly intimated that a refusal would be attended with escape; it ran to this effect—"Such is the character of the British officer, that his 'parole d' honneur' will better secure his person, than *locks*, *bolts*, and *fortresses*." A few days after, I was delighted to learn, that the minister's answer was confined to a simple negative. On the arrival of my clothes and dogs, from Verdun, I pretended to think of little else, except the study of Spanish; and these being the usual subjects of my conversation, the general suspicion gradually subsided, till no one but Ricketts and Cadell entertained an idea of the many schemes I was plotting with a view to departure. I kept up a correspondence, per post, with my friend Moyses, and several others, in Verdun, all of whom were instructed to declaim against escape, as being extremely dangerous, and disapproved of by the senior officers; this I did, because all our letters were opened, and it tended to deceive the police. It was my wish, that Moyses should make interest to be sent to Valenciennes; such removals being sometimes effected through

the application of our own officers. Finding there was no probability of a junction, and all suspicion being at length removed, I again commenced sounding those around me, when I found an opening to make a proposal to a brother mid, named Rochfort; he came into it immediately, the strictest secresy was observed, and we determined to be seldom seen together, although the most perfect harmony and cordiality prevailed between us, and, I may add, an implicit confidence in mutual support. He was well calculated for the adventure, as he was known to be a seaman, endowed with great bodily strength, and a still more admirable quality, firmness of mind; my only fear was from an apprehension of rashness, for to afford a chance of success in such an enterprize, it was of the utmost importance that courage should be tempered by prudence. With the assistance of Ricketts and Cadell, our preparations were completed, and the 15th of October, was fixed for departure. I was the more anxious to carry our plans into execution, so soon as matured, because the

commandant, with unremitting diligence, was daily visiting the citadel, and as frequently changing the posts of the sentinels, demanding a corresponding change on our part, and issuing stricter regulations for the security of the prisoners; at length, it was ordered, that any one, who should be seen in the night, without a lantern, whether English or French, should be instantly fired at, and, in the event of a gendarme's light being accidentally extinguished, while visiting the sentinels, which was done every half hour, he was to be constantly repeating—"Gendarme without light," until he reached the guard room. Besides these precautions, there were regular patroles: the difficulty and danger of escape had, therefore, considerably increased, and it became necessary, that our caution should keep pace with their vigilance. There still being a sentinel at the sally-port, my first plan was changed to that of getting into the upper citadel, which could only be effected by creeping upon the parapet above the north gate, letting ourselves down upon the bridge,

over the canal, and passing through the ravelin; but being unacquainted with those parts of the fortification, we intended to risk all, and trust to Providence for deliverance. This plan, however, did not bear the stamp of prudence, but what could we do better? it was, in fact, our only resource. We discussed the subject, with the utmost deliberation, and were convinced, that over the north gate, was the only point practicable, although a sentry-box stood within ten paces of it. These difficulties, however, did not alter our determination, but only excited additional energy; we persuaded ourselves, that the very precautions taken, would ultimately facilitate our elopement, for the gendarmes, judging, from the number of night sentinels, that we should deem it impossible, would, in the course of time, be so lulled into security, as to relax, and become more careless than if they were less numerous. By the friendly aid of a "détenu," residing in the town, we procured provisions, and a map of the northern department, and several other necessaries, almost indispen-

sable on such an expedition. The only thing now wanting was rope, which we obtained by purchasing skipping lines of the boys, this being a general amusement amongst them at this season; the bringing such small quantities openly into the citadel, excited no suspicion, and, in order to ascertain the requisite length, I counted the courses of bricks, in the pillars in the inner part of the north gate; allowing four to a foot, and five feet to the brick work, made the height about forty-five feet. Every thing being ready, and the day arrived, without any one entertaining the slightest suspicion, I was so fully persuaded of being in England in a few days, that I strutted about the citadel, smiling at every self-sufficient gendarme I met, half inclined to say, jocosely—"Adieu;" for, notwithstanding the multiplied difficulties, mutual confidence made us not only look upon them as trifles, but almost created a wish they were still greater, that the honour of surmounting them might be proportionably conspicuous, and thereby the astonishment and disappointment of the

watchful commandant be the more excited; for he would rather have lost ten seamen, than one of those insolent midshipmen. Ricketts, viewing with more coolness, the chances of failure and success, in all their bearings, and being aware that we were still ignorant of the difficulties to be encountered, in our progress to the upper citadel, did not appear so sanguine as ourselves. These difficulties, however, scarcely arrested our attention; for we were so wrapped up in the enchanting idea of sweet liberty, the glorious prospect of proving the inefficacy of "*locks, bolts,* and *fortresses,*" and the still stronger incentive of again wearing arms in the service of our country, that no obstacle could damp our ardour. About five P.M. on the day fixed for our departure, I was walking with Ricketts, and discussing the proposed plans, which were then ripe for execution, when Cadell came up, and told us that Rochfort had just been seized with headache and fever, so violent as to require his being immediately put to bed. This I could not credit, until made an eye witness of the fact. Struck with astonish-

ment, I gazed on the sufferer, and, scarcely able to ask a question, stole into the yard, absorbed in thought and perplexity; not cherishing the faintest hope of finding another in the citadel to join with us. The fact was, that from my having been before suspected, and publicly denounced, and likewise from my being aware of the extent to which "espionage" was practised in the fort, I was backward in introducing the subject to several, who have since proved by their conduct that they would readily have accompanied me. I wandered about for some time, reflecting on this extraordinary occurrence, little suspicious of what was afterwards developed, that, from our total ignorance of the impediments in passing into the upper citadel, failure, and its attendant consequences, must have been the result of trial at this time. My mind, however, was not to be diverted from the object in view, and, no sooner had I roused myself from the effect of this disheartening event, than I began to meditate new schemes, for I was resolved on the attempt, "coute qui coute;" but hesitated, whether

to await Rochfort's recovery, or to look out for another companion. Day after day passed in this state of suspense; when finding no amendment in his health, he was liberal enough to advise my seeking a helpmate amongst the seamen. He became so reduced by his illness, that even, if he did recover, he dare not risk exposure to night chills, for a considerable time; it was, therefore, with extreme reluctance, I abandoned the hope of his company. I then went to several of the most steady of the quarter-masters, and petty officers of that class, without success. Whether they doubted the possibility of escape, or were deterred by the recollection of the barbarous murders at Bitche, I cannot say; for it was known, that when the commandant of that place had gained intimation of an intended attempt, he suffered the fugitives to reach a certain point, where the gendarmes were concealed, ready to rush in, and murder them. Two sailors, named Marshall and Cox, fell victims to this refined system of republican discipline. A

somewhat similar act of cold blooded atrocity, afterwards occurred at Givet, in the person of Hayward, a midshipman: this gallant fellow, with his friend, Gale, had broken out of prison, in the face of day, and fled into the country; unfortunately, they were discovered, and the alarm given; two horse gendarmes immediately pursued, and overtook them in an open field. On their approach, Hayward, being unarmed, and seeing escape impossible, stood still, extending his hands, and exclaimed—" Je me rends :" but this was too favourable an opportunity to be neglected, for the savage gratification of shedding human blood. Neither the defenceless state of the individual, nor his prompt surrender could avert these merciless miscreants, from plunging their swords into his manly chest, and mangling the body in a horrible manner. It was afterwards taken into the prison-yard, stripped naked, and exposed to the view of the prisoners, for the purpose of intimidating others from the like attempt. Gale gave himself up at the same

time; and, although he received several severe wounds, they did not prove mortal.*

On the 21st of October, being the anniversary of the battle of Trafalgar, almost every window in the citadel was illuminated, and several transparencies were exhibited in honour of that glorious victory. The repeated and almost incessant cheering of the prisoners, continued for nearly two hours; many of the inhabitants of the town, obtained leave to visit the citadel, and appeared to join in the sport with all their characteristic frivolity. About this time, a club was formed in the midshipmen's quarters, which its convivial members designated by the title of "Union." I was invited to become a member, but, as the nature of its amusements did not accord with my habits, it was not until about the 25th of October, that I could be prevailed on to join it, and then only with a

* It will scarcely be credited, that the commandant gave the perpetrators of this courageous exploit, a pecuniary reward, with this observation:—"I give you this, for having killed one of them; had you killed both, the reward would have been doubled."

view of averting any suspicion that might otherwise arise, as to my meditated plans. One regulation imposed the penalty of drinking a tumbler of brandy, on the refusal to sing a song. As I could do neither, the tide of disapprobation was flowing against me, when, on condition of the remission of my penalty, I engaged, at the following meeting, to sing one that no one had ever heard; that day arrived, my poetical, as well as vocal, talents were brought into action, and exerted upon the prevailing foibles of every one present. The song, which was the one alluded to in Miller's work, was received with "eclat," and good humour, and ever after sung by the president, at the opening of the club, so long as it existed. The following Saturday, I was again about to be fined, when I repeated my former engagement, provided we should all be together.

Having, for some time, vainly indulged the hope of finding a companion willing to share my fate, and the winter fast approaching, I became apprehensive of not being able to make the attempt before the en-

suing spring. In the beginning of November, two sailors were sparring in the yard, and so common was this amusement, that it attracted the notice of no one but a stupid conscript of a sentinel, who, fancying they were quarrelling, quitted his post, and commenced a brutal attack on them, with the butt end of his musket: this breach of military discipline, soon collected a mob, and the endeavours of the men to ward off the blows, gave them the appearance of acting offensively. The guard was called out, when the gendarmes, rushing through the mob, cut and slashed on all sides. Whitehurst, whom I mentioned in the early part of this "Narrative," and I, happening to be there at the time, roused with indignation at such wanton barbarity, also pushed in, in the hope of preventing bloodshed. The Marèchal de logis, observing us in the "mêlée," desired us to send the men to their rooms, who, upon the order being given, immediately retired. This prompt obedience, bearing the appearance of generally acting under our influence, was, no doubt, the cause of our being de-

nounced, as the authors of the disturbance. We were, however, allowed to retire, whilst nine men, who were wounded, were seized as ringleaders; some being put into the "cachot," and others sent to the hospital. The next morning, Whitehurst, and myself, were arrested, and conducted to a separate place of confinement, upon the rampart, fronting the town. We were there locked up, with a sentinel at the door, without communication with any one, and ordered to be kept on bread and water. We were secretly informed, that the commandant had forwarded a report to the minister of war, representing Whitehurst and myself, as " chefs de complot;" the punishment of which, by the " Code Napoleon," is death. Although this did not much trouble us, being conscious of the falsehood of the accusation, yet we judged it right, to lay before the commandant, a firm and accurate relation of the facts, referring him to the Marèchal de logis, for proof of our interference having prevented more bloodshed, and restored tranquillity. This respectful appeal to the

justice of the commandant Du Croix Aubert, corroborated by the evidence of the Marèchal de logis, succeeded in restoring us to our comrades, and in inducing him to transmit a counter-statement to the minister of war. I mention this circumstance, because it produced a proposition on the part of Whitehurst, to attempt escape, so soon as we could make the necessary preparations. I readily acceded to his proposal; and, although I knew that, from his inexperience in the management of small craft, his assistance could not be great, in the event of getting afloat; I was perfectly convinced of his willingness and resolution. This consideration rendered it necessary, however, to seek a third person, and I sounded five men, separately, in the course of the day; but, so prevalent was the belief of the impossibility of getting out of the fortress, except by bribery, that they all declined.

In this difficulty, I consulted Ricketts, who proposed to introduce the subject again, to Hunter. I consented to accept him as a companion, provided we departed in a week; this stipulation being conveyed

to him, and our prospects painted in glowing colours, he agreed to join us. From that moment, he behaved with firmness and cordiality: not an hour was lost in procuring every thing needful for the occasion; but before we could fix a day, we resolved to obtain some information, respecting the obstacles in our passage to the upper citadel, that being the only way by which we could possibly escape. It was necessary to be very cautious in this particular, and many schemes were suggested. At length, hearing that that part of the fortifications abounded in wild rabbits, it occurred to me, to offer my greyhounds to one of the gendarmes, whenever he chose to make use of them. This I did, and the fellow mentioned it to the Marèchal de logis, who was equally pleased with the expectation of sport, for they verily believed, that such beautiful English dogs could kill every rabbit they saw. Shortly after, the gendarme came, with the keys in his hand, for them; the Marèchal de logis waiting at the gate. The dogs, however, had been taught to follow no one but their master,

so that their refusing to go, afforded me an opportunity of making an offer to accompany them, which was immediately accepted. Whitehurst, Hunter, and two or three others, requested to go with us; four other gendarmes were ordered to attend, and we went in a tolerably large party. We took different directions round the ramparts, kicking the grass, under pretence of looking for rabbits; few were found, and none killed. But we succeeded in making our observations, and in about an hour, returned, fully satisfied of the practicability of escape, though the difficulties we had to encounter were—scaling a wall, ascending the parapet unseen, escaping the observation of three tiers of sentinels, and the patroles, descending two ramparts, of about forty-five feet each, and forcing two large locks. These were not more than we expected, and we, therefore, prepared accordingly. On our return, we fixed the night of the 15th of November, for the attempt. Through a friend in town, I got iron handles put to a pair of steel boot hooks, intending to use them as picklocks. The

only thing now wanting, was another rope, and as that belonging to the well in the midshipmen's yard, was (from decay) not trust-worthy; in the night, we hacked several of the heart-yarns, so that the first time it was used in the morning, it broke. A subscription was made by the mids, and a new one applied for; by these means, we had, at command, about thirty-six feet, in addition to what our friends had before purchased of the boys. Every thing was now prepared; the spirits and provisions in the knapsacks were concealed in the dog kennel. On the 14th, Whitehurst communicated the secret to a young mid, named Mansell, who immediately proposed to join, and my consent was requested; but I strongly objected, upon the plea of his being incapable to endure the privations and hardships to which we might probably be exposed: by the persuasion of Ricketts and Cadell, however, I consented.

At length, the day arrived which I had so ardently desired, and the feelings of delight with which I hailed it, were such as

allowed me to anticipate none but the happiest results. The thought of having lost so many years from the service of my country, during an active war, had frequently embittered hours which would otherwise have been cheerful and merry, and now proved a stimulant to perseverance, exceeded only by that which arose from the desire I felt, to impress upon the minds of the Frenchmen, the inefficacy of vigilance and severity, to enchain a British officer, when compared with that milder, and more certain mode of securing his person—confiding in his honour. As the sun declined, our excitement increased. Our plans had been conducted with profound secresy, only our most confidential friends entertaining the slightest suspicion of our intention. At the usual hour we retired to rest; at half-past eleven we arose, and, in preparation for our departure, went into the midshipmen's little yard, unspliced the well-rope, and returned to the apartment. Desirous of bidding adieu to our messmates, the six who slept in the room were awakened.

On seeing the manner in which we were equipped, the rope slung over the shoulder, the knapsacks, the implements, and the laugh each one was endeavouring to stifle, they were so confused, that they could not, for the moment, comprehend why we were thus attired. When told that we intended being in England in ten days, they exclaimed, "impossible;" and argued against the attempt, as nothing better than the effect of insanity, insisting, that we were obstinately running, with our eyes open, into the very mouth of destruction. But, as such remarks, if listened to, might only have tended to create indecision, we shook hands, and said, good night. When about to depart, Cadell observed, we had better wait a few minutes, as it was then very star light, and nearly a calm. His advice was attended to, and we impatiently waited the passing of a cloud, in the hope of its increasing the obscurity; but the clouds dispersed, the wind died away, and nothing disturbed the silence of the night but the watch-calls of the sentinels, and the occasional footsteps of the patroles. This

anxious state of suspense continued until two o'clock, when we again rose to depart, but were prevented by the kind interference of our friends, who insisted on our waiting still a little longer, arguing, that as I had met with so many disappointments, and had so repeatedly avowed my intention to act prudently, we ought to wait, even till the morrow night, if necessary. "What folly," continued Ricketts, "to blast all your prospects, by false notions of honour;" but the idea of flinching at this crisis, was so repugnant to my feelings, and so wounding to my pride, that it was with the utmost reluctance, I could consent to postpone the attempt another minute. A little calm and deliberate reflection, however, soon convinced me of the propriety of his remarks, and of the pure source whence they sprang. I also felt, that our liberty and lives being dependant upon my discretion, it behoved me not to allow my judgment to be influenced, by the opinions of the illiberal and the hotheaded, who, I feared, would attribute our delay to other causes, than

the real one; however, that mattered little; patient and persevering, I anxiously watched the stars, and, sensibly alive to every thing that could, for a moment, endanger the confidence reposed in me, by my companions, I heard their opinion; when, finding it to coincide with my own, and the clock now striking three, we agreed to postpone the attempt, till the following night, and then start about eight P. M.; all present, promised secresy; we replaced the well-rope, returned our knapsacks to the care of the greyhounds, and retired to bed. The next morning, nothing material occurred; the movements of the preceding night were unsuspected.

In the afternoon, we amused ourselves with writing a letter to the commandant, in which we thanked him for his civilities, and assured him, that it was the rigid and disgraceful measures of the French government, which obliged us to prove the inefficacy of "*locks*, *bolts*, and *fortresses*," and, that, if he wished to detain British officers, the most effectual method was to put them upon their "honour;" for that alone was

the bond which had enchained us for more than five years. This letter was left with Ricketts to be dropped on the following day near the "corps de garde." At half-past seven P. M., we assembled, armed with clasped knives, and each provided with a paper of fine pepper, upon which we placed our chief dependance; for, in case of being closely attacked, we intended throwing a handful into the eyes of the assailants, and running away. The plan was, that Hunter and myself were to depart first, fix the rope, and open the opposing doors; a quarter of an hour afterwards, Whitehurst and Mansell were to follow: by these means we diminished the risk attendant on so large a body as four moving together, and secured the advantage of each depending more upon his own care; for if Hunter and myself were shot in the advance, the other two would remain in safety, and if, on the contrary, they were discovered, we hoped to have time, during the alarm, to gain the country. Our intentions were, to march to the sea side, and range the coast to Breskins, in

the island of Cadsand, opposite Flushing; and, if means of getting afloat were not found, before arriving at that place, we proposed to embark in the passage boat, for Flushing, and, about mid-channel, rise and seize the vessel. It was now blowing very fresh, and was so dark and cloudy, that not a star could be seen; the leaves were falling in abundance, and as they were blown over the stones, kept up a constant rustling noise, which was particularly favourable to the enterprize; indeed, things wore so promising an appearance, that we resolved to take leave of a few other of our brother officers: eight of them were accordingly sent for; to these I detailed our exact situation, the difficulties we had to contend with, and the means of surmounting them, reminded them of our letter to the commandant, of last month, and the glory of putting our threats into execution, in spite of his increased vigilance, read the one we had that afternoon written, and proposed, that any of them should follow that chose, but with this stipulation, that they allowed four

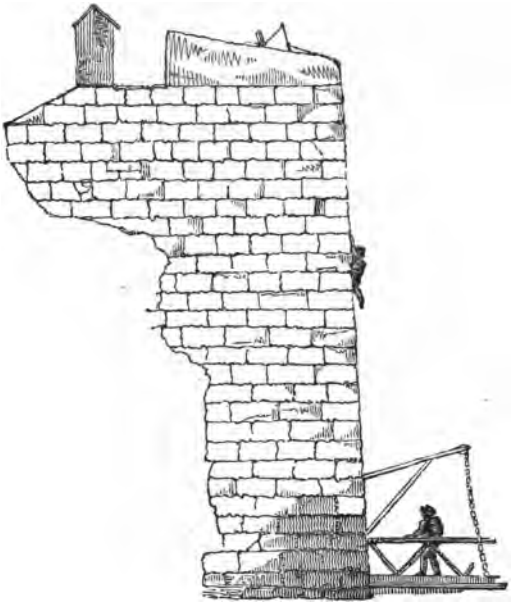
hours to elapse before they made the attempt. Upon which, it being a quarter past eight, Hunter and myself, with woollen socks over our shoes, that our footsteps might not be heard, and each having a rope, a small poker or a stake, and knapsack, took leave of our friends, and departed. We first went into the back yard, and, assisted by Rochfort, who was now convalescent, but not sufficiently strong to join the party, got over the wall, passed through the garden and palisades, crossed the road, and climbed silently upon our hands and knees up the bank, at the back of the north guard room, lying perfectly still, as the sentinels approached, and as they receded, again advancing, until we reached the parapet over the gateway leading to the upper citadel.

Here the breast work over which we had to creep, was about five feet high, and fourteen thick, and, it being the highest part of the citadel, we were in danger of being seen by several sentinels below; but, fortunately, the cold bleak wind induced some of them to take shelter in their

boxes. With the utmost precaution we crept upon the summit, and down the breast work towards the outer edge of the rampart, when the sentinel made his quarter-hourly cry of "Sentinelle prenez guarde à vous," similar to our "All's well;" this, though it created for a moment rather an unpleasant sensation, convinced me that we had reached thus far unobserved.

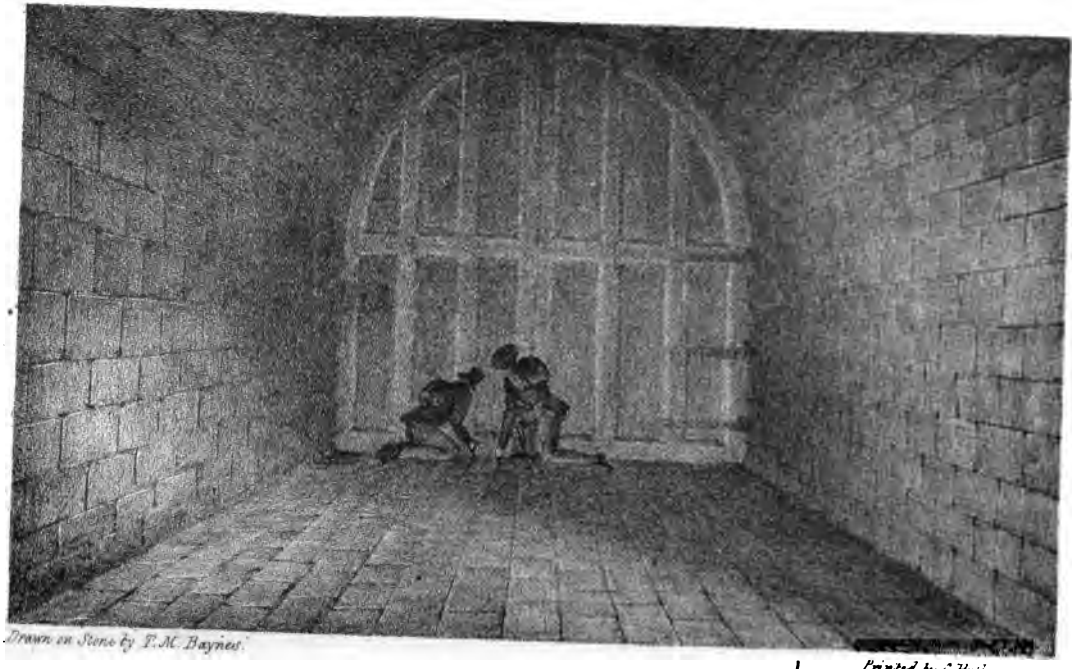
I then forced the poker into the earth, and, by rising, and falling with nearly my whole weight hammered it down with my chest; about two feet behind, I did the same with the stake, fastening a small line from the upper part of the poker to the lower part of the stake: this done, we made the well-rope secure round the poker, and gently let it down through one of the grooves in the rampart, which receives a beam of the draw-bridge when up. I then cautiously descended this half chimney, as it were, by the rope; when I had reached about two thirds of the way down, part of a brick fell, struck against the side, and re-bounded against my chest, this I luckily caught between my knees,

and carried down without noise.—The following sketch will render our proceedings more intelligible:



I crossed the bridge, and waited for Hunter, who descended with equal care and silence. We then entered the ravelin, proceeded through the arched passage which forms an obtuse angle, with a massive door leading to the upper citadel, and, with my picklock, endeavoured to

open it; but not finding the bolt yield with gentle pressure, I added the other hand, and gradually increased the force until I exerted my whole strength, when suddenly something broke. I then tried to file the catch of the bolt, but that being cast iron, the file made no impression; we then endeavoured to cut away the stone in the wall which receives the bolt, but that was fortified with a bar of iron, so that that was impracticable; the picklocks were again applied, but with no better success; it now appeared complete check mate; and, as the last resource, it was proposed to return to the bridge, slip down the piles, and float along the canal on our backs, there being too little water to swim, and too much mud to ford it. Hunter then suggested the getting up the rope again, and attempting some other part of the fortress. In the midst of our consultation, it occurred to me, that it would be possible to undermine the gate: this plan was no sooner proposed than commenced, but having no other implements than our pocket knives, some time



Undermining the Gate in the Ravelin at Valenciennes.

elapsed before we could indulge any reasonable hopes of success; the pavement stones under the door, were about ten inches square, and so closely bound together, that it was a most difficult, and very tedious process. About a quarter of an hour had been thus employed, when we were alarmed by a sudden noise, similar to the distant report of a gun, echoing in tremulous reverberations through the arched passage, and, as the sound became fainter, it resembled the cautious opening of the great gate, creating a belief that we were discovered. We jumped up, drew back towards the bridge, intending, if possible, to steal past the gens d'armes, and slip down the piles into the canal, but the noise subsiding, we stood still, fancying we heard the footsteps of a body of men. The recollection of the barbarous murders at Bitche, on a similar occasion, instantly presented itself to my sensitive imagination; it is impossible to describe the conflicting sensations which rushed upon my mind during this awful pause: fully impressed with the conviction of discovery,

and of falling immediate victims to the merciless rage of ferocious blood-hounds, I stood and listened, with my knife in savage grasp, waiting the dreadful issue, when suddenly I felt a glow flush through my veins, which hurried me on with the desperate determination to succeed or make a sacrifice of life in the attempt. We had scarcely reached the turning, when footsteps were again heard; and, in a whispering tone, "Boys," this welcome sound created so sudden a transition from desperation to serenity, from despair to a pleasing conviction of success, that in an instant, all was hope and joy. Reinforced by our two friends, we again returned to our work of mining, with as much cheerfulness and confidence as though already embarked for England. They told us the noise was occasioned by the fall of a knapsack, which Mansell, unable to carry down the rope, had given to Whitehurst, from whom it slipped, and falling upon a hollow sounding bridge, between two lofty ramparts, echoed through the arched passage with sufficient effect to ex-

cite alarm. Whitehurst, with much presence of mind, stood perfectly still when he landed on the bridge, and heard the sentinel walk up to the door on the inside, and stand still also; at this time, they were not more than four feet from each other, and, had the sentinel stood listening a minute longer, he must have heard Mansell land. Three of us continued mining until half-past ten, when the first stone was raised, and in twenty minutes the second; about eleven, the hole was large enough to allow us to creep under the door; the drawbridge was up; there was, however, sufficient space between it and the door, to allow us to climb up, and the bridge being square, there was, of course, an opening under the arch: through this opening we crept, lowering ourselves down by the line, which was passed round the chain of the bridge, and, keeping both parts in our hands, landed on the "guarde fous."* Had these bars

* The "guarde fous" are two iron bars, one above the other, suspended by chains on each side of the bridge, when down, serving the purpose of hand rails.

been taken away, escape would have been impossible; there being not sufficient line for descending into the ditch. We then proceeded through another arched passage, with the intention of undermining the second door, but, to our great surprise and joy, we found the gens d'armes had neglected to lock it. The draw-bridge was up; this, however, detained us but a short time, we got down, crossed the ditch upon the "guarde fous," as before, and landed in the upper citadel. We proceeded to the north east curtain, fixed the stake and fastened the rope; as I was getting down, with my chest against the edge of the parapet, the stake gave way. Whitehurst, who was sitting by it, snatched hold of the rope, and Mansell, of his coat, whilst I endeavoured to grasp the grass, by which I was saved from a fall of about *fifty feet*. Fortunately there was a solitary tree in the citadel; from this a second stake was cut, and the rope doubly secured, as before: we all got down safe with our knapsacks, except Whitehurst, who, when about two thirds of the way, from placing his feet

against the rampart, and not letting them slip so fast as his hands, got himself in nearly a horizontal position; seeing his danger, I seized the rope, and placed myself in rather an inclined posture under him; he fell upon my arm and shoulder with a violent shock; fortunately neither of us were hurt: but it is somewhat remarkable, that within the lapse of a few minutes, we should have preserved each other from probable destruction. We all shook hands, and, in the excess of joy, heartily congratulated ourselves upon this providential success, after a most perilous and laborious work of three hours and three quarters. Having put our knapsacks a little in order, we mounted the glacis, and followed a footpath which led to the eastward. But a few minutes elapsed, before several objects were observed on the ground, which imagination, ever on the alert, metamorphosed into gens d'armes in ambush; we however marched on, when, to our no small relief, they were discovered to be cattle. Gaining the high road, we passed, (two and two, about forty paces apart,) through a very

long village, and having travelled three or four miles, felt ourselves so excessively thirsty, that we stopped to drink at a ditch; in the act of stooping, a sudden flash of lightning, from the southward, so frightened us, (supposing it to be the alarm-gun,) that, instead of waiting to drink, we ran for nearly half an hour. We stopped a second time, and were prevented by a second flash, which alarmed us even more than the first, for we could not persuade ourselves it was lightning, though no report was heard. Following up the road in quick march, our attention was suddenly arrested by a draw-bridge, which being indicative of a fortified place, we suspected a guard-house to be close at hand, and were at first apprehensive of meeting with a serious impediment; but observing the gates to be open, we concluded that those at the other extremity would be also open, and therefore pushed forward. We drank at the pump, in the square, when it was recollected that this was the little town of St. Amand. Directing our course by the north star, which was oc-

casionally visible, we passed through without seeing a creature. About an hour after, still continuing a steady pace, four stout fellows rushed out from behind a hedge, and demanded where we were going. Whitehurst and Mansell immediately ran up; and, as we had previously resolved never to be taken by equal numbers, each seized his pepper and his knife in preparation for fight or flight, replying, in a haughty tone of defiance, "What is that to you, be careful how you interrupt military men:" then whispering, loud enough for them to hear, "la bayonette," upon which they dropt astern, though still keeping near us: in the course of a quarter of an hour, on turning an angle of the road, we lost sight of them, and continued a rapid march, frequently running, until about five A. M., when we were unexpectedly stopped by the closed gates of a town. We retraced our steps a short distance, in the hope of discovering some other road, but we could find neither a footpath, nor wood, nor any other place

of concealment. We quitted the high road, and drew towards a rising ground, there to wait the dawn of day, in the hope of retreating to some neighbouring copse; no sooner had we laid ourselves upon the ground, than sleep overcame us. Our intention was, if no wood could be seen, to go to an adjoining ploughed field, and there scratch a hole in which we could hide ourselves from a distant view; upon awakening from a short slumber, we reconnoitred around, and found our position to be near a fortification; being well acquainted with such places, we approached, in the hope of finding an asylum. At break of day, we descended into the ditch, and found the entrance into the subterraneous works of the covered way, nearly all blocked up with ruins and bushes; an opening, however, was made, we crept in, our quarters were established, and the rubbish and bushes replaced in the space of a few minutes. This most providential and pleasing discovery, added

to our many narrow escapes from discovery, excited a feeling of gratitude to that omnipotent Being, who in his infinite mercy had thus cast his protecting wings around us.

I have since heard that the first intimation of our departure at Valenciennes was at dawn of day, when, on opening the north gate, the rope was seen, suspended from the parapet. The roll to muster was instantly beaten, and the alarm given to the neighbouring peasantry by the firing of guns. The midshipmen, on whom suspicion first fell, were hurried into ranks, half dressed, and when the names of the absentees were called over, some one tauntingly replied, "Parti pour l' Angleterre;"—this tone of triumph considerably exasperated the gens d'armes, and inflamed the zeal of the pursuers; it also might have had some influence in exciting the solicitude of the commandant for our apprehension. But to give a more adequate idea of the fury of his wrath and disappointment, and also of his determination to recover us, dead or alive, I may add, (as I have since learnt, from

a respectable inhabitant who happened to dine in his company a few days after he had received the mids' first application to be restored to parole,) that he treated escape as utterly impossible and hopeless, and unreservedly spoke of the letter as containing a threat—a mere "gasconade"—"Nous verrons," said he, "si ces blancs-becs peuvent m'échapper." The report of this threat was soon circulated, and when it was really executed, my informant assured me, that no occurrence relating to the prisoners, excited a more general sensation; the whole town was in confusion. All the bloody-minded rabble, were let loose, with multifarious weapons, and "carte blanche," to "massacrer" these lawless "aspirans." Besides which, 500 of the "garde nationale," were dispatched to scour all the woods within five leagues, and an additional reward of 300 livres was offered, for the capture of each of us. The reason for limiting the search to that distance, was a belief of the improbability of our having exceeded it, after the arduous task of undermining, &c.

But to proceed:—We were totally unacquainted with the country; an examination of the maps pointed out the place of our retreat to be the fortification of Tournay; the fallen ruins were the bed upon which fatigue, and a confidence of security, procured us a sound and refreshing sleep. At three P. M. we enjoyed our dinner, notwithstanding the want of beverage, for upon examining the knapsacks, the flasks were found broken. Whitehurst, having lost his hat in descending the first rampart, was occupied in manufacturing a cap, from the skirts of his coat. It rained all the afternoon, and the weather, in the evening, growing worse, we were detained till about ten P. M., when, no prospect of its clearing up presenting itself, we quitted our comfortable abode, walked round the citadel, to the westward, over ploughed ground, until, coming to a turnip field, we regaled ourselves most sumptuously. By eleven, we had rounded the town, and gained the north road. During the night we passed through several villages, without seeing any one, and, at six A. M.

arrived at the suburbs of Courtray, expecting there to find as snug a retreat as the one we had left the preceding evening; but, to our mortification, the town was enclosed with wet ditches, which obliged us to seek safety elsewhere. Observing a farm house on the right, our steps were directed towards it, and thence through bye lanes, until a mansion was discovered; this we approached, in the hope of finding an out-house which would afford us shelter for the day; nothing of the kind could be seen; but, not far distant, a thicket was descried, of about 150 paces square, surrounded by a wet ditch, from fourteen to twenty feet wide; here then we determined to repose our wearied limbs, and, it being day-light, not a moment was to be lost: the opposite side of the narrowest part of the ditch, was one entire bed of brambles, and, in the midst of these, we were obliged to leap. Hunter, Mansell, and myself, got over tolerably well; but, when Whitehurst made the attempt, stiff with wet and cold, and the bank giving way, from his great weight, he jumped

into the water, and it was with some difficulty he could be extricated, and not without being dragged through the brambles, by which he was severely scratched. We lay ourselves down in the centre of this swampy thicket. The rain had continued without intermission from the time of leaving Tournay, and, notwithstanding it somewhat discommoded us, yet we were consoled by the additional security it afforded; this little island protected us till near dark, when we walked round it to find the easiest point of egress. From the torrents of rain that had fallen during the day, but which had now ceased, the ditches had become considerably wider, and there was only one opening in the bushes, whence a leap could be made; of this, three of us profited, the fourth obtained a passage, by the aid of a decayed willow, which overhung the opposite bank. Courtray being fortified, it was impossible to cross the river Lys at that place; we were, consequently, obliged to go to Deynse, that being an open town. About eight P.M., proceeding over plough-

ed ground, rendered almost impassable by the heavy rains, to gain the high road, guided by the north star, and assisted by a strong southern wind, we marched on at a great rate, and, about ten, entered the village of Haerlabeck. Observing a " cabaret," at the north end, Whitehurst here purchased bread and gin, our remaining bread being completely saturated with moisture; this regale re-animated and fortified us against the inclemency of the weather, which it was apprehended might be productive of sickness. At one, the rain re-commenced, and, in such profusion, that it obliged us to retreat to the protection of a neighbouring hay stack, where we lay sometime, but, finding no chance of fine weather, we resumed our march until five, and then entered a wood about three miles from Deynse; a spot was chosen in the thickest part, where we fenced ourselves with fallen leaves, and twigs. We lay down in our little redoubt, and slept until day-break, when, finding our position too exposed, from its proximity to a cottage and main

road, we were obliged to quit it, but previously broke up the work. Having penetrated farther into the wood, we concealed ourselves as before; here we remained during the day, listening to the howling of the wind, which rose gradually into a furious storm of driving sleet, rain, and hail; and, such was its violence, that our garments were scarcely felt to be a covering. We quitted this wood soon after dark, and gained the high road for Deynse. After marching about an hour, and passing several people, (Whitehurst and Mansell always preserving their stipulated distance in the rear,) we were overtaken by two horse gens d'armes; but it being exceedingly dark, they took us for conscripts, part of their own escort, for one of them, in a muffled tone, as if fearful of exposing his nose, said, "Make haste, you will be too late for your lodging tickets;" reply was made that we were fatigued; soon after, the rain increasing, they trotted on, repeating, "Make haste, make haste." We were not much flattered by the honour of their company, but not in such danger as

one might imagine, as the road was between two woods, with a broad ditch on each side; had they stopped to dismount, we should have instantly jumped over, and run into the wood, where no cavalry could have pursued.

The rain continued to pour down, and, having been completely soaked to the skin during many hours, about ten P.M. we held a council of war. Although such consultations have been designated the "bane of enterprise," and considered an effort on the part of the commanding officer to diminish his responsibility, in the event of failure, it was not so with us,—for, being without a commander, we consulted upon almost every important measure; the unanimity that prevailed, not only rendered success more certain, but made each bear his own individual privations with cheerfulness, and proved a stimulant to our energy, which seemed to increase with increasing difficulties and sufferings. After mature deliberation, it was agreed to enter the town, and reconnoitre the low public houses, in order to purchase

provisions; we accordingly marched on. Whitehurst entered one, which he found too full of company, and then a second, in which he saw four stupid looking young men, almost as wet as ourselves; we resolved all to go in, keeping the door at the elbow in case of necessity; we did so, and, asking for gin, drew round the stove. From the conversation of these men, it appeared, that a large party of conscripts had arrived that evening, on their road to Ghent, and were billeted about the town; this information we immediately turned to account. Our landlord was given to understand we were conscripts, who, in consequence of lameness, were allowed to travel at leisure, upon condition of reaching Ghent by seven on the following morning; but that, having been prevented, by the bad weather, from arriving in time to procure billets, we would pay for lodging and supper; to this he readily agreed. One of the drunken fellows in the room, rousing from his lethargy, wildly stared, and abruptly complimented us with the novel information that we were

deserters; when the landlord, observing our apparent indignation, which he mistook for real, interposed in order to keep peace, and begged us to take no notice of it, as they were drunk; to which we feigned an unwilling acquiescence, but were, nevertheless, somewhat disconcerted; however, he fell asleep again, and, soon after, they departed, too drunk to make any further observation. Notwithstanding our fears and the garlic, we ate a most hearty supper; at midnight, after preparing every thing for a start, in case of emergency, and all our clothes dry, we lay down on two beds, each keeping watch in turn, until four A. M. when we bought two flasks of spirits and some provisions. The weather was fine, and not a creature stirring, but the landlord; we paid him, and departed. Without thinking of the road to Ghent, we turned to the left, when he called to us, "You are going wrong;" we thanked him, and proceeded as he directed; the door, however, was no sooner closed, than we crossed the street, one by one, crept silently past his house, and

took the road to Bruges; so that, had there been any suspicion, this accidental occurrence must have thrown the chace off the scent. Continuing our journey to the N. W., until dawn of day, we entered a thick low wood, and here lay without disturbance, basking in the vivifying rays of the sun, and listening to the church bells summoning all good people to assemble. We would willingly have joined them, had the church been so secure an asylum as the wood. As Whitehurst, with a praiseworthy and religious sense of the dangers he was about to encounter, had packed his prayer-book in his knapsack, and preserved it through all his disasters, we read prayers, offering up our humble thanksgivings for deliverance from the hand of the enemy. About sun-set, it began to rain again, we quitted the wood, and proceeded to the westward, by a very bad road, frequently halting to rest, our feet being excessively tender. At about one A. M,, we passed through a village, and took shelter, for some little time, from a very heavy shower, under a portico, and

then went on through another village. At three, crossed the high road to Bruges; a solitary public house was near, in which no one could be seen but an old woman, sitting by the fire; and being again thoroughly wet, we entered, asking for gin. Many minutes had not elapsed before a Frenchman came in, baited his horse, and departed, without addressing, or seeming to take the least notice of us. After regaling ourselves with eggs, and drying our clothes a little, we continued our march in the rain till near seven; then struck into a wood by the road side, and fortified ourselves with leaves as before. The rain fell in torrents, during the whole day, attended with repeated showers of hail. The increasing violence of the wind also, rendering the weather intensely cold, which caused such a perpetual chattering of the teeth, that it was with difficulty we could articulate with sufficient distinctness to be understood. In addition to these sufferings, our feet were severely blistered. I had a tumour forming on my left side, which obliged me to lie always on the right,

and proved the foundation of a rheumatism, which I much fear I shall feel through life. Towards evening, the incessant fall of rain, had so nearly inundated the wood, that, had we continued two hours longer, we must have been floated out of our nest. Soon after five P.M. we proceeded by the main road; but it being very dark, we could no longer direct our course by the stars. About eight, we met a Fleming, of whom we inquired the road to Bruges, but through his misunderstanding us, we were induced to walk back a considerable distance; when, passing a lone hut, we again asked the question, and were told not to quit the high road to the left; by this retrograde movement, we had marched about four miles unnecessarily; nevertheless, towards midnight we arrived at the gates of Bruges. At this time, we were all in a most deplorable condition,—wet to the skin, our feet bleeding, and so swollen, that we could scarcely walk at the rate of three miles an hour. Near the gates we observed a public house, and, having hitherto found such places to afford relief and safety, at this

hour of the night, we entered, and saw nobody but an old woman and a servant; at first they appeared somewhat surprised, but asked no questions except such as regarded our wants, frequently exclaiming, "pauvres conscripts." We dried our clothes, when the sudden transition from cold to heat split Hunter's feet, several of his nails also were loose, and Whitehurst had actually walked off two. The fire made us all so very sensitive, that we could scarcely bare a foot to the floor; but found some relief by bathing them in oil; having, however, enjoyed a comfortable supper, we lay ourselves down as before, keeping watch in turn, until four A. M., when we paid the old woman, and departed. After wandering about in the dark, endeavouring to find out a road round the town, until break of day, we sought refuge in a neighbouring wood: here we reposed until three in the afternoon, screened by dead leaves: about that time a boy alarmed us; no sooner had he disappeared than we retreated, one by one, to a place of greater security, near a windmill, which,

for the sake of distinction, was termed *Windmill Wood.* This was the second fine day since leaving Valenciennes, and the sun, diffusiug its benign influence throughout our whole frame, so renovated our strength, that, forgetting our wounds, we felt equal to the severest trials. At sun-set, the fort was again broken up, and, having had time during the day to consult the map, we marched directly to the bridge over the canal, doubled the town to the westward, and gained the road to the coast. About ten, being exceedingly fatigued from the difficulty of walking in the lacerated state of our feet, we thought of halting for the night; judging this more prudent, than going into danger with the certainty of being unequal to any sudden effort, or rapid retreat; however, unwilling to lose an hour, and dreading the probability of becoming worse and weaker, we determined to proceed. About eleven, having gained only a mile in three quarters of an hour, we were compelled to halt, and bivouac'd in an adjoining copse, exposed to repeated showers.

At eight A. M., being surprised by an old woman collecting wood, who immediately fled in the utmost consternation, we also decamped, deeming it imprudent to remain in any spot where we had been seen; scarcely had we quitted the copse, when two sportsmen were observed to enter it, we immediately jumped over a ditch, hobbled about two miles to the eastward, crept into an almost impenetrable thicket, and there remained in the rain till nine P. M. We then gained the high road, and continued our route to Blankenberg, a village on the coast, a few miles to the eastward of Ostend. At ten, passing by a solitary public house, we observed through the window, an old man, two women, and a boy, sitting round a comfortable fire, at supper; Hunter and myself entered for the purpose of purchasing provisions to take on board any vessel we might be enabled to seize, being then about four miles from the sea; we asked for gin, the woman of the house rose and stared at us, apparently alarmed at our appearance; we repeated the demand without obtaining

a reply; still gazing, for a few seconds, regardless of our request, she rapturously exclaimed, "Mon Dieu, ce sont des Anglois," immediately offering us chairs. Somewhat disconcerted at this unexpected reception, we again asked for gin, to which she replied, "Take seats, and you shall have whatever my house can afford." We thanked her for the attention, reiterating our request; she insisted we should partake of her fare, assuring us that not a soul should enter the house during our stay, if we would but sit down; we again refused, observing, that, being conscripts, ordered into garrison at Blankenberg, we were fearful of punishment should we not arrive there that night according to orders; she burst into a loud laugh, running to bar the door and window shutters, at the same time ordering the servant to fry more ham and eggs; we assured her it was useless, as we had already taken supper at Bruges, and that we dare not stay, adding, it was a pretty compliment to us Frenchmen to call us English; she jocosely replied, "Well, then, you are not English, but it is so

long since I saw any of my good folks, that I insist on your eating some ham and eggs with me; besides, you will not be able to get away from Blankenberg to night." We used every means in our power to dispossess her of her suspicions, to all which she only replied, "Take chairs, if it is only for a few minutes, and then 'par complaisance,' I will believe you." Her persevering deportment, bearing the almost certain stamp of sincerity, together with our hungry inclinations, induced us to accept the invitation, and partake of her luxuries, knowing there could be little danger, as Whitehurst and Mansell were on the look out. During our most comfortable regale, she talked of nothing but her dear English, (notwithstanding our repeated endeavour to change the subject,) dwelling particularly on the happiness of her former life, when in the service of an English family. She uttered several broken sentences in English, of which we took not the slightest notice, but which confirmed in our minds the idea of her having lived sometime where the

language was spoken. Being just about to rise, furnished with provisions for our companions, a loud rap announced some one at the door:—the woman started up, seized me by the arm, and, pushing me into the next room, exclaimed, "Pour l'amour de Dieu par ici, les gens d'armes." Although we felt sure it was Whitehurst, yet we had no objection to see the result of this manœuvre, and therefore made no resistance to her wishes; but complied with seeming reluctance; still, as it was possible he might have knocked to warn us of the approach of some one, we followed her to the back door; at parting, she took me by the hand, and repeated her assurance of the impossibility of getting off from Blankenberg that night, and desired us to return, adding, "Good night, friends, I shall see you again." Nothing but a thorough conviction of our being absconding prisoners of war, added to a sincere regard for the English, could have produced such conduct; certainly neither our actions nor accent betrayed us, for they were less foreign to the French than her own.

No sooner had we regained the road, than our companions joined us; from them we learnt, that, being alarmed at seeing the window closed, they were on the point of bursting open the door; when, peeping through the shutter, they saw every thing that passed within, and, wishing to be of the party, gave the rap which alarmed our friendly hostess. Continuing our march for the coast, we passed through a village about midnight, stopping occasionally to listen, with delight, to the pleasing monotony of the waves rolling over the beach, which, as we approached, created feelings of enjoyment that I had never before experienced. Between twelve and one A. M. we entered the village of Blankenberg, protected from the sea by the sand bank. Observing a large gateway, apparently the road to the beach, I passed through to reconnoitre, leaving my companions in the street; to my great consternation, I found myself near a guard-house, and close to a sentry-box, from which I had the good fortune to retreat, unobserved. Proceeding through the village, to the westward,

and finding a foot-path leading over the sand bank, we ran down to the sea, forgetting our wounds, and exulting as though the summit of our wishes was attained, and we were on the point of embarkation. Indeed, so exquisite was the delight, that, regardless of consequences, we dashed into the water, drank of it, and splashed about like playful school-boys, without being the least disconcerted that the few vessels that could be seen were high and dry, close under the battery; nor will these feelings create surprise, when it is recollected, that more than five years had elapsed since we last quitted the sea in the Mediterranean, and that to regain it was considered as surmounting the principal obstacle to final success. But when these first transports had a little subsided, and were succeeded by rational reflection, we could but acutely feel the disappointment; although, had we been enabled properly to calculate the tides, we might have foreseen this event, for it was high water on that day about half-past five P.M., consequently, low water about midnight,

and, as the vessels cannot be launched from that flat beach, excepting about the last quarter of the flood, and the first of the ebb tides, we could not have got afloat, had we arrived even four hours earlier.

Our spirits, however, were not to be damped, and, notwithstanding our original intention was to make for Cadsand, we resolved to wait in the neighbourhood the issue of another night; to this end we returned by the same path, to the village, and, while going leisurely along the strand street, heard a distant sound of the clashing of muskets, and footsteps of a body of men running; this was decidedly the guard, who had probably seen us from the heights. We instantly doubled back, crossed by a bye lane, leaped a ditch, and ran over the fields, until we judged ourselves out of reach of the pursuers. This was another instance of our narrowly escaping danger, which some may attribute to blind chance, but which, by us, was felt to be an interposition of Divine Providence in our favour; for there can be no

doubt, that, had we continued two minutes longer on the beach, or had not the muskets' clash given the alarm, we certainly should have come in contact with the guard; the result of which would have been imprisonment, or, not improbably, death. On regaining the high road, we consulted what measures to adopt; after some consideration, it was determined to revisit the "cabaret;" we accordingly returned to an adjoining wood, and there lay until day dawned, when Hunter and myself proceeded to the house, and were told the old lady had not yet risen. The nature of our embassy not admitting of much time being wasted in "punctilious etiquette," we went to her chamber door, and solicited an audience; this was readily granted, without any confusion, or even quitting her bed. After the usual salutations, we apologized for our early call, attributing it to the commandant at Blankenberg having ordered us back to Bruges, by seven o'clock, adding, that gratitude for her kindness, the preceding evening, had induced us to call "en passant."

"Bah," she exclaimed, with a significant grin, "I told you, you could not get off from Blankenberg, and that I should see you again; sit down, we will have coffee, and then talk over matters;" at the same time ordering her son, a lad about twelve years of age, to look out of the door and let her know when he saw any one coming; she then rose and dressed herself. We were recommencing a train of compliments, for the purpose of bringing about the truth, when she exclaimed, "Hold your tongues, I knew that you were English gentlemen the moment I saw you." The whole tenor of her familiar and pithy style of address, convinced us of her sincerity, and we immediately offered her one hundred pounds, to be divided between her and any boatmen who would undertake to land us and our comrades in England, or put us on board an English vessel. "Comrades," she exclaimed, "what comrades?" We replied, there were two others in the neighbouring wood, anxiously waiting our return, "Call them instantly," she said, "and twenty others if they are

there; in three or four days you shall all "be in England, or I am not an honest woman." The signal was given; Whitehurst and Mansell promptly joined,—when, attempting to congratulate each other upon this auspicious occasion, our hearts were so overpowered with joy that we could scarcely articulate; the tear of gratitude trickled down the cheek, whilst the hand of friendship simultaneously met that of its neighbour; even the old woman, (notwithstanding her vivacity) could not refrain from participating in our feelings.

After cutting the money, amounting to about £20 out of our collars, to let our hostess see we were not pennyless: we sat down to breakfast before a comfortable fire. She afterwards conducted us into a hay-loft, over a back room which was never made use of in winter, so that we were now in comparative safety; dependant, indeed, on the sincerity of the family: it was not, however, probable, they would prove treacherous; for, exclusively of the woman's apparent devotion to the English, the sum we proffered, so

much exceeded that of the French government, viz £2 : 1s. 8d. per head (for she, as well as ourselves, at the time, was ignorant of the reward offered at Valenciennes), that it would amply compensate for the risk. The roof which now sheltered us, covered a solitary "cabaret" situated midway, between Bruges and Blankenberg, known by the sign of the "Raie-de-chat," which, by way of abbreviation, we called the "Cat," and being the house of police correspondence, it was visited regularly three times a week, and sometimes oftener, by the gens d'armes, consequently the less likely to be suspected. According to the "code Napoleon," the penalties attached to favouring the escape of prisoners of war, were a fine of £12 10s. the expences of the law proceedings, and two months' imprisonment. This law, however, did not intimidate Madame Derikre, for such was her name; she resolved upon serving us; yet notwithstanding her apparent sincerity and assurance of success, our minds were not perfectly at ease until twenty-four hours had elapsed; that being

Drawn on Stone by T. M. Baynes. *Printed by C. Hullmandel.*

View of the "Raie de Chat" with the Entrance to the Loft.

the time allowed for proprietors to announce to the police, the presence of strangers in their houses. In order to excite confidence, we offered her all our money; this she generously refused, declaring that if success did not attend our exertions, she should not expect a stiver. No sooner were we in the loft, than, aided by our friendly hostess, our separate wounds were examined and dressed. After dark, the servant maid, named Cocher, and the dog Fox being placed at the front door to watch, we descended to partake of some broth; anxiously waiting the return of a messsenger sent by Madame Derikre to Blankenberg for her confidential friend, a man named Winderkins. About nine, the boy came with intelligence, that he was gone to Ostend, and that his wife would send him to the "Cat" upon his return. We remounted into the loft, and slept as comfortably upon clean straw, as the pain of our wounds would allow. The following evening, Mynheer Winderkins was introduced; he undertook, upon condition of sharing the reward, to find a fisherman

who would either land us in England, or put us on board an English man of war; and promised information on the subject the following day. In continual expectation of the happy hour of departure, we remained in our snug retreat; receiving frequent messages from Winderkins until the 1st of December, when he appeared, attributing his delay to the precautions necessary to be taken on so critical an occasion; but having at length succeeded, we were to hold ourselves in readiness to depart that night. Soon after eight P. M. furnished with a few provisions, we quitted the "Cat", leaving with Madame Derikre bills to the amount of £50, reserving the other fifty for Winderkins and the boatmen. In an hour we reached Blankenberg; following our guide down the beach to the eastward of the village, and concealing ourselves amongst the sand-hills, whilst he went to apprise the fisherman of our arrival. In this position we remained about two hours, Winderkins occasionally returning and desiring us to be particularly silent, there being several men

on the beach, and the patrole on the alert. After a further absence of half an hour, he again returned, telling us, we must be patient, and postpone the event to the next night, the tide having then ebbed so as to leave the vessels high and dry. We returned to the "Cat" much to the surprise of Madame Derikre. The following day, Winderkins not appearing, the boy was despatched to learn the cause. About noon he returned with answer, that as there was not the slightest chance of success that night, he thought it imprudent to expose us to useless danger. We now began to suspect his fidelity, and thinking he might doubt the performance of our promise, it was agreed to give him half the remaining cash, and a bill of £30, when on the beach, upon condition that he fulfilled his engagement, or returned it. On the 3rd he appeared, and informed us, that in consequence of the fisherman having been unsuccessful, they had obtained permission to remain afloat a mile from the shore, and, provided no English vessel was seen, it was probable that that permission would

be extended to several days; we must, therefore, be patient, and he would, upon the honour of a Fleming, insure success. On the 4th he sent his daughter to say that all was well, and he would be with us in the evening. He kept his word: to insure his fidelity, we divided our money as before agreed, between him and Madame Derikre, having previously paid her the greater part of our twenty "louis" for food.

We now bade adieu to the "Cat," and, accompanied by Madame Derikre and Winderkins, proceeded to Blankenberg. After leaving us some time behind the sand-hills, the latter returned with information that he could not find the fisherman who had undertaken to embark us. It was instantly determined to seize one of the schuyts; we accordingly ran down to the beach, preceded by Winderkins as a look out, gave him his bill, and leaped on board the outermost vessel; the sails were arranged and every thing speedily prepared for weighing. The night was dark, we sat silent as the grave, waiting with intense anxiety, until the tide, which was then flowing, should

float our little bark. Whilst thus listening to the murmuring break of the sea, which seemed slowly to approach, as if chiding our impatience, yet inviting us to the protection of its bosom, our dearest hopes appeared upon the point of being realized; these hopes however were but of short duration, and only tended to render our disappointment more bitter: the tide rose, just to cast a few sprays against the bows, and to retire. So high had our expectations been raised, that the water had receded some feet, ere we could believe it had left us; it was then, however, too evident to be doubted. In so critical a situation, within pistol shot of the fort, there was little time for deliberation; disappointed, but not disheartened, every article was replaced as it had been found, and we reluctantly withdrew, fully convinced however of the practicability of getting afloat from Blankenberg, if we did but seize the proper opportunity. It was, therefore, determined to repeat the attempt the following night, and, in the mean time, to reoccupy our old quarters.

In the morning, Winderkins sent to say, he had reason to suspect the fisherman had proved treacherous; that we had better not quit the "Cat," being there in perfect security; and that a day or two of patience might save us years of misery. The soundness of this reasoning made us content in the loft, until the evening of the 9th, when he came, and exultingly congratulated us upon the present certainty of success. "In two days," said Mynheer, "you shall be with your families, for I have now found a fisherman who will undertake the job, provided his vessel be restored to him;" of this we gave him every assurance, and he left us. After so irksome a state of suspense, we were the more elated at the now flattering prospect of a speedy restoration to our native shore. On the 10th he returned, damping our hopes with information, that, in consequence of the appearance of several English vessels of war, all the fishing smacks were hauled above high water mark. Suspecting such repeated excuses originated either in fear, or incapacity to fulfil his engagement, it was de-

termined to go again that night, so as to be on the beach at half flood. We, accordingly, departed towards midnight, and rendezvoused at his house; his daughters keeping watch at the doors, for it appeared all the family were in the secret. Leaving my friends there, I went with Winderkins to the beach, and found the vessels as he had represented, except one, which was moored with five hawsers, about pistol shot from the fort, just to the eastward of a jetée. I got on board to examine her sails, and to see that every thing necessary could be got ready in an instant. I found that the wind, being nearly on shore, we should be obliged to make aboard to the eastward, which, in a flat bottomed craft, without sufficient ballast, the ropes and sails all covered with frozen snow, and a good deal of swell upon the beach, would have been of very doubtful issue: should, however, the wind shift only two points, there was a chance of success. With this information I returned to my comrades, and we all went down to the beach, there watching the

rise and fall of the tide; when, the impracticability of getting the vessel to sea, as the wind then stood, being evident, and seeing her again hard and fast, we returned to the country from the fourth trip. The next day, bad weather prevented the fishermen from going to sea, and obliged them to haul the vessels beyond the reach of the surf. The hopes of getting away from Blankenberg being somewhat lessened, our attention was directed to other quarters. Winderkins was despatched to Ostend, and Nieuport, to find what chance there was of succeeding in that neighbourhood, with instructions to return in forty-eight hours. Three days, however, elapsed without our hearing a word, and the continuance of bad weather rendered night excursions to Blankenberg, useless. Repeated messengers were now sent, but no tidings of Mynheer. I therefore resolved upon going myself, in disguise, for the double purpose of seeing if he was there, and of ascertaining the position of the schuyts. Equipped with Monsieur Derikre's great coat, large broad brimmed hat, and can-

vas gaiters, with scraps of paper directed to two of the inhabitants, under pretence of purchasing pigs, I set out at two in the afternoon, attended by old Cocher, the servant maid, who walked about fifty paces in advance. On my arrival, Madame Winderkins received me in the utmost confusion: I questioned her upon her husband's delay; she told me she was apprehensive some accident had befallen him, or he certainly would not have failed in his promise. In the midst of our conversation, he entered, having visited the coast as far as Calais, without discovering any prospect of success more promising than at Blankenberg; he assured me, that not a craft, nor a boat of any kind, was to be seen in a situation whence it could be carried off. After a fulsome train of compliments, upon the patience and perseverance we had hitherto displayed; he repeated his entire devotion to the cause, be the risk never so great, and said, that during the detention of the fishing vessels, he would range the coast, and endeavour to find out other means of embarking. I

then went with him to the beach, and examined the precise situation of the schuyts. During an hour's promenade in this delightful, though perplexing, situation, an English brig hove in sight. I fear I might incur the imputation of bordering on the romantic, were I to attempt to describe the varied and conflicting sensations, by which I was agitated at again beholding the British flag; nor can I say, what risks I would not have hazarded in order to get afloat, had there been a boat at hand; in in which case, I, of course, should have returned in the night, to carry off my comrades. I left this scene with reluctance, and returned to the "Cat," previously directing Winderkins to go the following day towards Flushing.

On the 16th, he returned, without any satisfactory information; but he was enabled to assure us, that it was utterly impossible to seize the Flushing packet boat, as we had intended, every passenger being strictly examined, and his passport proved, before he was suffered to embark; so that our hopes seemed limited to Blankenberg.

He also assured us, that the number and vigilance of the patrole were such, that an attempt to range the coast, would be attended with certain capture. This intelligence, anything but cheering, made it difficult to decide upon the best mode of proceeding; but, being still persuaded of the possibility of getting afloat from Blankenberg, it was determined to make another effort before we left that part of the coast. Madame Derikre informed us, the cause of Winderkin's delay, when despatched to the westward, was—his going to Dunkirk, where he had a private conference with a banker, who expressed a favourable opinion of the bill we had given him, having before negotiated others with the same signature; observing, at the same time, that he was aware the gentleman had eloped, and advising him not to make use of it at present. This information, no doubt, urged him to persevere in our behalf, and was also an additional stimulant to the avowed friendship of the Derikres. In the evening, Winderkins sent

word that the vessels were all preparing for sea; but the next morning our expectations were again disappointed, by information that the government had laid an embargo on all the Blankenberg craft, until they furnished five seamen for the navy. The vessels were again hauled up above high water mark, and the fishermen fled in all directions. We now thought of making our way into Holland; but the severity of the weather, the extreme difficulty of penetrating into that country, the want of means to travel, combined with the dissuasion of Madame Derikre and Winderkins, who repeated their assurances of shelter and assistance, induced us to remain in our present situation. In the daily hope of a favourable change, we continued in the loft, but were occasionally in some danger; for the house was seldom without gens d'armes, custom-house-officers, or foot soldiers, looking out for the seamen. The door of our loft, was, however, kept shut, and the ladder, by which only it was accessible, placed over

head, in the stable, out of sight. Day after day elapsed, without any relaxation in this decree.

Feeling how precarious was our situation, Hunter and myself proposed to reconnoitre the woods, in order to find out the most secure asylum, in the event of being disturbed. About two P. M., the boy first looking out to see if the coast was clear, we sallied forth on the high road to Bruges, but had scarcely gone a mile, when two horse gens d'armes were observed coming towards us: being then near a gate, we struck off into a large ploughed field, surrounded with wood, and, when screened from the gens d'armes by the hedge, took to our heels. It appeared, that, no sooner did they observe us turn off the road, than they galloped for the gate; for they entered the field just as we were about to reach the wood. Luckily, there was a wide ditch, so overflowed, that part of the wood was inundated; we instantly plunged in, swam over, escaped into the interior, and there lay concealed until dark, when we re-

joined our friends in the loft. To our surprise we learnt, from Madame Derikre, that she had heard of our adventure from the gens d'armes, who halting to bait, told her, they were very nearly catching two of the Blankenberg sailors, "but the rogues swam like ducks." This narrow escape was a warning, to be more cautious. I mention it, because it was the only act we committed, which had not an object in view worth the risk. We, consequently, now confined ourselves to the loft, receiving from, and sending messages to, Winderkins. At this time, we occasionally amused ourselves by writing, in French, bulletins of our proceedings from the 16th of November; and it is upon these memoranda that this "Narrative" is grounded. On the 2d of January, information was brought that two of the vessels had been nearly floated, by the last tide. Upon the receipt of this joyful news, it was resolved to pay them a visit that night; the wind being from the eastward, and the weather fine, our hopes were most sanguine, amounting almost to a confidence of immediate

departure. Accordingly, soon after eleven, we went down to the coast, remaining behind the sand hills, as before, until the tide rose within a few feet of one of the vessels, which was found embedded in the ice and snow; we, however, jumped on board, and, in this situation, remained about twenty minutes, in the anxious hope that every succeeding wave would lift her bows; but, the tide ebbing, we were obliged to retire. The next night, we again proceeded to "Mynheer's" house, who seemed to consider it the last time they should see us, "Tomorrow," he observed, "we shall all be *chez nous*." When the tide had risen within a few feet of its utmost height; Hunter and myself got on board the same vessel as before, and made several preparations, that there might be no delay or confusion, when she floated. So soon as all was ready, we ran to the other two, with the joyful information; on our way thither, Hunter expressed some doubt, which proved nothing but an untimely difference of opinion; the exact state of the vessel I represented to Whitehurst and

Mansell, who, always ready to run any risk, rather than suffer the slightest chance of success to escape, coincided with me in the propriety of making the attempt; Hunter, believing it useless, declined attending. Nevertheless, we three instantly repaired on board, let slip the stern fasts, and began to heave upon the bow hawser. Each wave, as it rolled in, lifted the vessel, and, having hove a taut strain, she crept seaward about a foot every rise, falling upon the sand, with a shock almost sufficient to drive the mast through her bottom. We exerted every nerve, and had got her out about ten fathoms, when, to our mortification the tide receded faster than we could heave a head; soon after, she became immoveable. On jumping ashore, Hunter rejoined us, and, in justice I should add, was exceedingly distressed at his previous decision, as the result proved that his additional strength would have enabled us to get to sea. We were thus obliged to return to the "Cat." In the morning, Winderkins intreated us to remain quiet, as various rumours, relative to the moving

of the vessel, were circulating; some attributing it to the unusual height of the tides, whilst others confidently asserted that an attempt had been made to steal her. This dispute was productive of no other evil, than an order to haul the vessels higher up; that, however, was sufficient to deprive us of all hope of getting away from Blankenberg until the embargo was taken off; we, therefore, consulted upon other means, when Madame Derikre agreed to go to Bruges, and advise with a friend of her's, named Moitier, with whom she had before been leagued, in unlawful practices respecting conscripts. To guard against treachery on his part, she was instructed in the following tale:—"A young Englishman, late a prisoner of war, is concealed at Flushing, and offers £50 to any one who will land him in England, or cause him to be put on board an English vessel." In the event of succeeding, my plan was to get away, and return in the night to carry off my comrades; but they, unwilling that I should leave them, proposed that Mansell should be the one to

effect this, believing, that with his smooth face, he might pass, in disguise, for a girl. Moitier, at first delighted at this new source of acquiring wealth, readily assented, but was afterwards intimidated by the apprehension of this Englishman being a spy of the French government, and, as he was at that time under its particular "surveillance," for other illegal deeds, declined interfering for the present. A few days elapsed without hearing any thing further upon the subject, when Madame Derikre was again despatched to him; she returned with the information that he would be at the "Cat" in a day or two. In the mean time Winderkins was reconnoitring east and west, ignorant of her having consulted Moitier. In fact, all parties were equally desirous of forwarding our views, and, therefore, the more anxious to prevent our quitting this part of Flanders.

On the 11th we wrote a letter to the commander-in-chief, off Flushing, and gave it to Winderkins, who was desired to offer a bribe to any one who would put it on board an English ship; but we have

no reason to believe it reached its destination.

On the 12th we again sent Madame Derikre to Moitier, who now consented to go immediately to Flushing, and make an agreement with a smuggler, promising information on the subject in a very few days. Our hopes being thus kept continually alive by new projects, without any definitive arrangement, it was again debated whether we should remain in the loft or march into Holland: the former was determined on until the result of Moitier's trip to Flushing should be known; our present comparative security being preferable to a dangerous uncertainty, particularly as we were convinced that it was the interest, as well as the most anxious desire of all our friends, to effect our departure. On the 14th, we were overjoyed to learn, from Winderkins, that the embargo was taken off, and the vessels all preparing for sea. This joy, however, was not of long duration; for, on going to Blankenberg the next evening, we found, that not a vessel had been launched, and that the permission to go to sea, was

but a "ruse de guerre," to entrap the seamen required for the navy. Winderkins, alarmed at our presence, requested us immediately to retreat to the country, for the whole of the police were out, lying in ambush for the sailors. In order to insure our safety, and to give the signal to disperse, if necessary, he marched on before, through bye paths, until we regained the "Cat."

On the 16th, he sent word, that, the five seamen having been taken, the extra police was withdrawn. The night being very dark, we ventured down, and found that some of the vessels had been to sea, but were replaced in their former positions. The following night, knowing the tide would rise gradually higher, the jaunt was repeated. But the recent circumstance of one having dragged her anchors, as was supposed, induced them to obey the commandant's order. At this time we learnt, that Moitier was gone from Flushing to Holland, determined to find a smuggler who would assist this young Englishman, for he was still ignorant of our number. On the 25th, Winderkins,

having been daily pressed for the fulfilment of his engagement, to find a fisherman to take us off, but which he had as often evaded under one frivolous pretext or other, was obliged to confess that all his endeavours had been hitherto unavailing, and that he at length despaired of success. It was now evident that we must depend upon our own exertions alone, to gain possession of a vessel, if we persevered in the attempt to embark at Blankenberg. He, however, undertook to continue on the look-out, whilst we seized a boat: this, indeed, was a very important service; he was a sergeant of the national guard, and frequently on duty at Blankenberg; consequently, not only the less likely to be suspected, but able occasionally to give a turn to the conversation at the fort, which might otherwise excite increased vigilance. We, therefore, gave him for past services, and as a retaining fee, a bill of £15, instead of the £30, which, with what he had already received, amounted to about £17. He expressed his gratitude, and vowed to deserve it. A few days

elapsed in this state of uncertainty, during which, we occasionally received messages from both Bruges and Blankenberg, serving to keep us in continual expectation of the morrow bringing forth something decisive. On the 2d of February, having again journeyed to Blankenberg, we found the tide to rise within a very few feet of two of the vessels. The following night, the excursion was repeated, when the same vessels were lying with their bows awash, but there was not sufficient water to float them. We were now completely puzzled how to act: could cash have been raised, we had resolved upon marching into Holland, for the thoughts of continuing any longer in a state of inactivity, became insupportable. Money, however, could not be procured; we were, therefore, compelled to remain in the loft.

Scarcely a day passed without something occurring to revive our hopes, until the 17th, when Winderkins again appeared, and told us the evening tide would float one of the vessels; we, therefore, at a proper hour, went to his house, and thence

to the beach, most anxiously watching the roll of every wave; but, as if fortune had doomed us to be the shuttle-cock of her caprice, our hopes appeared excited only to put to proof our patience and perseverance; the water receded, without reaching a single vessel. Very bad weather setting in, attended with heavy falls of snow and hail, rendered night excursions to any distance, almost impracticable.

Madame Derikre proposed our being below at night, for the covering of the loft being nothing but open tiling, through which the wind blew from three sides, we were frequently benumbed with cold, particularly as we dare not move about, to take exercise. This offer was readily accepted, one keeping watch at the door all night, regularly relieved, and occasionally assisted by our friend Fox. Being now more comfortably lodged, we forsook the loft entirely; occupying, in the day, a place about eight feet by four, with a door opening directly upon the wood. Many schemes were suggested, but none sufficiently feasible to induce us to shift our quarters,

during the present inclement weather. One project was, that I should go, in disguise, to Moitier: and I consulted Madame Derikre, who insisted on apprising him of my intention, that he might not be absent. Moitier, however, declared he would have nothing to do with the affair if I attempted to approach his house; promising, at the same time, to give me a conference at the "Cat," in the course of the week. The week, however, expired, without our seeing him; but a message was brought to the effect that he had again been to Flushing, and that we should see him ere long. On the 1st of March, Winderkins came, and assured us, that every thing had been so long quiet at Blankenberg, that the fishermen were gradually neglecting to haul the vessels up, and that he was certain the next spring tide would float several. Upon going, the following night, we found them situated as he had described, though none were yet within reach of the water. On the 3d, we waited until the tide began to ebb, it, however, only broke against the bows of two or three;

but as it had considerably gained, and would still increase the two next tides, we congratulated ourselves upon the happy prospect of the speedy termination of our troubles, and the final accomplishment of our hopes. With heart elate, as in the moment of victory, on the night of the 4th of March, I made my thirteenth, and last trip to Blankenberg, and, leaving my comrades at "Mynheer's" house, went with him to the beach to reconnoitre; when, finding several vessels nearly afloat, we returned to our party, with the joyful information. Furnished with provisions, and a lantern, we took a friendly leave of Winderkins' family, proceeded silently to the water's edge, and jumped on board the easternmost vessel, in the pleasing confidence of having at length evaded the vigilance of the enemy, and of being on the eve of restoration to our native soil. The wind was fresh and squally from the W. N. W., with a good deal of swell; the moon, although only three days after the full, was so obscured by dark clouds, that the night was very favourable for our pur-

pose. The vessel was moored by five hawsers; two a head, and three astern; it was arranged, that Whitehurst and Mansell should throw over-board the latter, Hunter and myself the former; this was preferred to cutting them. We had been so long in Flanders, and received such protection from the natives, that all harsh feeling which might have existed towards an enemy, was so mellowed into compassion for their sufferings under the Corsican yoke, that we were unwilling to injure one of them, and therefore had determined, if in our power, to send back the craft, which, being a fishing "schuyt," might probably be the only support of an indigent family. Whilst Whitehurst and Mansell were executing the duty allotted to them, Hunter and myself got ready the foresail, and paid* over-board one of the hawsers. The tide now rolled in, the vessel floated, and we hove her out to within about four fathoms of her buoy. Whitehurst and myself being ready to cut

* Let run fathom after fathom.

the other hawser, and hoist the sail, Hunter went to the helm, when he found the rudder was not shipped, but lying on the poop. We instantly ran aft, and got it over the stern, but the vessel pitched so heavily, that it was not possible to ship the lower pintle. We were now apprehensive of the total failure of the attempt; for, to go to sea without a rudder, would have been madness, and being nearly under the battery, we were in momentary expectation of being fired into. Several minutes were passed in this state of anxiety and danger, still persevering in the attempt to ship the rudder, but at length, finding it impossible, without a guide below, and feeling that our only hope, was dependant upon the success of this important effort, in the excitement of the moment, I jumped over board; at the same instant, the vessel springing a little a head, and the sea washing me astern, it was not without the greatest exertion I could swim up to get hold of the stern post. Hunter, seeing that I was dashed from her by every wave, threw me a rope;

this I made fast round my waist, and then, with some trouble, succeeded in shipping the rudder. The effort of swimming and getting on board again, although assisted by my comrades, so completely exhausted me, that I lay on my back for some time, incapable of moving a limb; but at length, rallying, I went forward to help hoist the foresail, whilst Hunter cut the hawser, and then ran to the helm. The sail was no sooner up than the vessel sprang off, as if participating in our impatience, and glorying in our deliverance; such, however, is the uncertainty and vanity of all human projects, that at the very moment when we believed ourselves in the arms of liberty, and our feelings were worked up to the highest pitch of exultation, a violent shock suddenly arrested our progress. We flew aft, and found that a few fathoms of the starboard quarter hawser having been accidentally left on board, as it ran out, a kink was formed near the end, which, getting jambed between the head of the rudder and the stern post, had brought the vessel up all

standing; the knife was instantly applied, but the hawser was so excessively taut and hard, that it was scarcely through one strand ere the increasing squall had swung her round off upon the beach. At this critical juncture, as the forlorn hope, we jumped out to seize another vessel, which was still afloat; when Winderkins, seeing a body of men running upon the top of the sand hills, in order to surround us, gave the alarm: we immediately made a resolute rush directly across, leaving our knapsacks, and every thing but the clothes on our backs, in the vessel; the summit was gained just in time to slip over on the other side unseen. We ran along the hills towards the village for about a hundred yards, when, mistaking a broad ditch for a road, I fell in, but scrambled out on the opposite side. Mansell, who was close at my heels, thinking that I had jumped in on purpose, followed; this obliged the others to jump also. Having regained the "Cat," we related the heart-rending disaster to Madame Derikre. Fearing, from the many articles left in the

vessel, that some of them would give a clue to our late abode, and be the means of causing a strict search, she was desired to destroy every thing that could lead to discovery, or suspicion; then taking all the bread in the house, and leaving Mansell there, the rest immediately set out for *Windmill Wood*, on the other side of Bruges, where we arrived a little before day-light. It had been previously agreed, that Mansell should go in disguise, as a girl, to Moitier, and detail the whole truth, for he was still ignorant of there being four of us. Mansell was to procure a pair of shoes for each, some provisions, as much cash as he could raise, and, in his girl's dress, bring these articles out to us; should he succeed in this, our intention was to quit Flanders, and walk through France, and Germany, to Trieste, in the gulph of Venice; for, having previously learnt that the entire coast of Holland was guarded with as great strictness as that of Flanders, we had abandoned the idea of penetrating into that country.

Although, before this catastrophe it was

never definitively arranged that Mansell should be the one who was to be introduced to Moitier, for the purpose of getting away, and returning in the night to take off the others; yet, knowing from his youth, that he was incapable of undertaking the journey at present meditated; we were now unanimous that he should profit of this chance.

Not having had time to dry our clothes at the "Cat," we were in a most deplorable state, shivering with cold, and wet to the skin; the tails of our jackets, solid boards of ice, and not a shoe amongst us worthy the name. In this wood we remained three days, each succeeding hour seeming to redouble the sufferings of the last; for, besides bodily exposure, the knowledge that we must fly the coast, and traverse the continent at this inclement season without a certainty of adequate means, excited the keenest anxiety. As Mansell did not appear with the promised supplies, we concluded, he had either forgotten the situation, or was taken prisoner; and, being apprehensive that

Moitier had proved treacherous, I reproached myself for having consented to expose him to this danger. The stock of provisions was now almost expended, and, being incapable of marching any distance for want of shoes, it was resolved to return to the vicinity of the "Cat," in the hope of learning the fate of Mansell, and being there supplied with necessaries for our projected journey. We set out at eleven o'clock, and, reaching a neighbouring wood, about one A. M., halted to listen; being apprehensive that if any article had been found in the vessel to create suspicion of the "Cat," that gens d'armes would be laying in ambush ready to butcher us. It was arranged, that Whitehurst and Hunter should remain under the hedge of the orchard, whilst I approached the house; and, in the event of my meeting with such numbers, as to render their assistance unavailing, I was to give the alarm, and they were to fly, regardless of me. With firm, yet cautious step, I advanced, crept through a gap in the hedge, and entered the orchard, looking around,

and listening like the timid deer, for the approach of the savage hound, whose thirst nothing but blood can satiate: starting, as by electricity, at a cold touch on my hand, I involuntarily threw myself into an attitude of defence, but seeing nothing, and judging that coward fancy had created this alarm, I again advanced, when I perceived by my side the dog Fox, whose cold mark of recognition in the dark, had been the cause of it, and who, trotting before me to the house, every now and then returned, as if to invite, and assure me that no enemy was near. Having reached the window, I gently tapped; Madame Derikre opened it, begged me not to come in, and sent the dog to look out. My first inquiry was, of the doubtful fate of Mansell; she said, that she had escorted him to Moitier's, disguised as a girl, had left him there, and had not seen him since. She then related, that, soon after her return, the house was surrounded and searched most minutely by thirty-six gens d'armes and police officers, without their finding any thing to corroborate their suspicions. During our

residence in the loft, we had procured five sticks, and put spike nails, with a sharp edge and point into the ends, to use as weapons of defence; four of these were taken in the vessel, the fifth we had given to young Derikre, who incautiously left it by the fireside; fortunately, it was not noticed, or it would have been sufficient proof to implicate the whole family. She likewise related, that the lantern, having been known to belong to Winderkins, his house was also searched, and both of them were taken before the police. He confessed that the lantern was his property, but swore he had lent it to Madame Derikre; this, she acknowledged, stating, that she had put it out of the door in lieu of her lamp, sent to be repaired, and that some one had stolen it. The baker, who was also taken before the mayor, proved that the consumption of bread at the "Cat," had been more than doubled, for several weeks; this, however, was evaded by a declaration of an unusual increase of custom, to which she could safely swear, without risk of perjury. This explanation

did not entirely clear her of suspicion, the house was again surrounded, and searched on the second night, but with no better success.

Being, therefore, in apprehension of surprise, she requested me not to come too near, and agreed to go to Moitier, in order to borrow some money for us, and procure shoes. I described to her the spot near which we intended to conceal ourselves; and then, provided with some bread, gin, and cold potatoes, returned to my comrades. We now retreated to a thick wood, about three miles to the westward, and remained there without hearing from the Derikres until noon of the 10th, when a rustling amongst the bushes, set us all upon the "qui vive." I crept forward, and, having listened attentively for a few moments, to my great joy perceived it was occasioned by our faithful friend, Fox, who fawned upon us, apparently as much elated at the meeting as ourselves. On going with him in the direction whence he came, I found his young master bringing cheese and eggs; we had been so long

together, that he became really attached to us, and, on the recital of our hardships and sufferings, he was so struck with the view of our camp, which was fortified with twigs made into basket work, that the kind-hearted boy burst into a flood of tears. We learnt from him, that his mother had been to Bruges, but that not finding Moitier at home, she was afraid to say a word to his wife. She had, however, seen Mansell, who was concealed in the house, he told her that he had not been able to procure money, and that he had gone out to *Windmill Wood*, but that his search for us had been ineffectual; she also learnt that Moitier was gone into Holland, and was expected back in the course of the week. All this the boy related with as much feeling as if he thought our situation the most deplorable and wretched that human nature could endure; he promised to bring us bread, and eggs, so long as we remained in the neighbourhood, but thought it much better to be in prison than to perish, with cold, in the woods.

In order to recompense him for his

trouble, and to insure his future assistance, I made him a present of my watch, the only valuable I possessed. Two days more were passed in this basket fort, when we were alarmed by the approach of an old peasant; well knowing that the Flemings entertained the utmost horror of the conscription, we passed ourselves off for conscripts: the old man seemed to sympathize in our distresses, and promised to bring us a loaf of bread; but, as it would have been imprudent to have suffered him to depart, and to have waited his return, he was kept in conversation until nearly dark, and, when he left us, we broke up the camp and fled. Scarcely had we gone a mile, following each other at some little distance, when Fox and his master were discovered: the latter advised us to go to a thick wood about two miles east of the house, and gave information of Moitier's return. Soon after taking up this position, the weather set in intensely cold, and, literally clad in armour of ice, we lay listening to the whistling wind, and shivering with exposure to the chilling blast,

which not only defied repose, but threatened the most calamitous effects; indeed, the limbs were sometimes so benumbed, that it became absolutely indispensable to shake and twist ourselves about, to promote the necessary circulation of the blood. Nor did there appear any prospect of the termination of this misery, for, as the black and ponderous clouds passed swiftly over us, the wind increased, the hail beat furiously down, and the trees trembled, until the raging violence of the storm seemed to threaten the uprooting of the very wood we occupied. In this exposed situation, with variable, though piercing cold weather, we remained until the 15th, when the boy, with the help of Fox, again traced us out, and said, his mother had seen, and detailed to Moitier our exact situation; he pretended surprise, declaring that Mansell had never given him reason to suppose that he had companions, and, lamenting at the same time his inability to be of service at present, promised to assist in a day or two. This affectation of surprise, and assertion of Mansell's silence,

was no doubt intended to detain us in the neighbourhood, by keeping alive our hopes of aid, until he saw what profit he was likely to make with Mansell, little caring what severe reflections he was thereby casting upon the lad's character; whatever may have been the fact, we could obtain neither shoes, nor supplies of any kind to enable us to depart, although kept in daily expectation of them. Whitehurst now suffered so severely from illness, that doubts arose as to the possibility of his continuing much longer in this state of exposure, and, had not his complaint taken a favourable turn, his patience and fortitude must soon have yielded to stern and absolute necessity.

In addition to our anxiety for the sufferings of our companion, a degree of gloomy restlessness pervaded every thought, auguring nothing but evil; but whether these feelings proceeded from pain and despondency, or bore any affinity to that instinctive foresight which teaches the tenants of the forest to prepare for tempestuous weather, I will not

determine. With this presentiment, however, we prevailed on the boy to bring a horse-cloth, and as neither of us had a second coat, it proved one of the greatest comforts I had ever experienced; indeed, it so renovated our strength that we were more firmly bent than ever upon marching into Germany; but the increasing severity of the season confined our attention to present preservation, rather than heedlessly running into greater dangers. The dark and cheerless clouds, upon which our eyes were continually fixed, soon discharged flakes of snow in such profusion, as to threaten our being cut off from the "Cat;" but fortunately, to prevent the too frequent passing and repassing, Madame Derikre had sent us a stock of bread, gin, and a little meat, which were economized to the best advantage. At the commencement of the fall of snow, we moved about the wood, and, finding a hollow, from which a tree had been dug, we plucked a quantity of twigs and laid in it, so as to make a dry bed; the horse cloth was then spread loosely over, propped up by a stick in the

The Situation of the Author in the Wood coming out from under the Horse Cloth.

centre, fastened down with pegs, and dead leaves strewed round the edge, thus forming a kind of tent; one corner was left open for the free admission of air, and for our own entrance and exit. Here we lay in such comfort, that the sensation experienced can only be imagined by comparing them to turning into a warm bed after being nearly frozen to death. The snow falling all night, in the morning our nest was covered nearly a foot deep, and scarcely rose sufficiently above the surrounding white surface, to indicate the place of our concealment. It being almost impossible to travel in such weather, we determined patiently to wait its breaking up; unless, indeed, Moitier, in the mean time, should furnish us with sufficient supplies to justify a fresh movement. Very little change occurred until the 19th, when we again despatched a messenger to Bruges, with a note to Mansell, but, as we received no answer, it was, doubtless, intercepted; it being Moitier's policy to prevent communication between us. A sudden thaw almost inundated the wood, and it was,

with much difficulty, that the boy could get to our retreat with provisions. On the morning of the 21st, he came, almost out of breath, with information, that a party of men were again about to surround the house, and, it was supposed, to search the adjoining woods. Upon this, we instantly broke up our camp, threw the twigs in all directions, and ran through the woods a mile due east. A ditch, about eighteen feet wide, now presented itself before us; luckily, at a little distance, was a piece of timber lying across, upon which we passed without a moment's delay, and being too well versed in military tactics to leave the bridge for the enemy, it was drawn over, and thrown into a hedge.

Our hasty retreat was continued about three miles, when reaching an almost impenetrable thicket, we crept in and hid ourselves. In this thicket we lay some time, expecting every moment the approach of the pursuers; but, as we occupied a very favourable position for retreat, the surrounding woods being intersected with wide ditches, one of which was imme-

diately in our rear, we were in no very great apprehension for the issue. In the midst of our consultation, a distant noise was indistinctly heard, which seemed gradually to approach, until the actual motion of the bushes put an end to all doubt; we instantly jumped up, ready to fly, when a dog was discovered drawing near, and not far behind, some person penetrating through the thick wood; but, ere we had time to decide, our faithful friend Fox burst to view, fawning and curling himself in silent congratulation, as if sensible of a narrow escape: almost at the same moment came his affectionate master, who brought information, that a body of gens d'armes only halted at his mother's, on their way to Blankenberg, but fancying they were come to make another search, he immediately ran off to give us timely notice. The keen lad, guided by the sagacious Fox, had followed our footsteps, until he came to the broad ditch, when finding the bridge gone, and suspecting we had pulled it over, he had run round a considerable distance; having so done, he

returned to the opposite bank, and continued hunting us up. We immediately retraced our steps, replaced the bridge, and marched back to our "trou," which was rendered as comfortable as before. This little trip, we fancied, did us good, from the exercise it afforded. A heavy fall of rain during two days, prevented the boy from getting to us; and, apprehensions were now entertained, that, from the overflowing of the ditches, and almost inundated state of the woods, we should be compelled, by hunger, to expose ourselves in the day, although, in preference, we had resolved to endure the utmost extremity of privation. Indeed, we already felt the want of food; our fare was seldom more than bread, sometimes potatoes, and occasionally eggs, though a few days previous, we had had a little meat, the bones of which were thrown away; for these, I now searched, and felt delight in finding one, which I ground down with a canine voracity, reproaching myself for my previous extravagance. At length, hunger and wet forced us to quit the camp, and,

about ten at night, approaching the "Cat," two of us went in, dried our clothes, and got something to eat, whilst the third, with Fox, kept watch at the door. The sagacity of this dog was really wonderful, Madame Derikre assured us, that, latterly, this faithful animal, as if he knew our enemies, growled at every gen d'arme he saw, although he had been in the habit of seeing, and being caressed by them almost every day of his life. She again said, that Moitier had promised to assist us the moment Mansell was gone. Our hopes being somewhat enlivened by these repeated assurances, it was determined to wait a few days longer, could we survive the cold, to see the result of Mansell's departure. We now ventured to pay nightly visits to the "Cat," in order to procure provisions, taking each time a different direction, to avoid making a path. One night, Whitehurst, exhausted with illness and fatigue, while crossing a ditch, fell in, and swinging under an old tree that overhung the water, it was with some difficulty we could extricate him. After this accident,

we always left him in the nest; but Hunter and myself continued our nightly excursions to the " Cat," and found its inmates at each succeeding visit, more and more determined to persevere in rendering us assistance; indeed, so much had we grown upon their esteem, and so intense was the interest excited by the extremity of our sufferings, that, on one occasion, poor old Cocher, the servant, offered to pawn even her gold cross and heart, and all she possessed, to Moitier, if he would but befriend the poor " Englishers." About this time, Madame Derikre's visits to Moitier were so frequent, that he, at length, forbad them. She, however, learnt that Mansell had embarked for England, with a smuggler, in an open boat fifteen feet in length; this was a great point, and our hopes were once more turned towards the coast, in the full expectation that he would return in the night, with a boat to take us off; but day after day passed without intelligence.

Moitier not having fulfilled his promise of sending us supplies, so soon as Mansell was gone; and, indeed, seeming to have for-

bidden any further communication between us, by refusing to admit Madame Derikre; I determined, in spite of his previous threat, to have nothing to do with the affair, if I attempted to approach his house, to go to Bruges, and see him myself; nor was this a hasty, though then an unconcerted resolution; for, notwithstanding we had been nearly a month in this dreary wilderness, exposed to the severest weather, our clothes worn to threads,—notwithstanding my comrades had hitherto evinced no impatience at the doubtful result of our protracted sufferings, which they would have seen multiplied to the utmost extremity of human endurance, rather than have been taken; and, notwithstanding my confidence in their perseverance; yet so strong was their repugnance to separation, and my belief of their disapproving of the attempt, that I judged it more prudent to take this step, without consulting them, than to enter into a discussion which might create an unpleasant difference of opinion; and, as it could not involve them in danger, the disgrace, and

consequent punishment attendant on failure, would fall solely on myself. With this view of the measure, on the night of the 31st of March, so soon as Hunter relieved me in watch, at the door, and we were ready to return to the woods, I communicated to him my plans, adding, that if they neither saw, nor heard from me the next day, they might rest assured, I had fallen into the hands of the enemy, and might then act for themselves. He in vain endeavoured to shake my determination, but, as I was convinced of the feasibility of the project, and had taken my resolution, we shook hands, and parted. After making the necessary arrangements with Madame Derikre, I lay down in the stable, with my friend Fox at the door, who seemed to watch with increased vigilance, as if aware of the importance of his trust. My bed, in this solitary cell, was certainly not one of roses, for, independently of the anxiety arising from the fear of surprise, I at first felt something like compunction, at not having previously consulted my companions; nor was I with-

out apprehension, that they might suspect I intended to desert them; and, should any thing occur to cause the capture of either party during our separation, the report of such a disgraceful act might be circulated, without my ever being able to prove its fallacy: but the evident necessity for some decided step, and the conscious rectitude of my intention, presently dissipated such thoughts, and created a cheering presentiment that my plans would lead to some favourable result. At length, my mind became wholly absorbed in the consolation which this feeling afforded, and I lay meditating schemes for the guidance of the future, till about four o'clock, scarcely able to close my eyes: at that hour, I gently tapped at Madame Derikre's window; she immediately equipped me in the same dress I had worn to Blankenberg on the 15th of December, and furnished me with a carpenter's rule, line, and chalk, &c. After taking some refreshment, we set out "tête-a-tête," for Bruges. At dawn of day, we separated, keeping about a hundred yards apart, and entered the

town, just as the labourers were going to work. In passing the guard at the gates, I was chalking, and rubbing out figures upon the rule, as if my mind was wholly occupied in my business. Although I did not turn my head, I could, nevertheless, observe, from under my broad brim, two gens d'armes eyeing me, from head to foot; I, however, trudged on, uninterrupted, following the guide from street to street, until we entered that in which Moitier lived. Fortunately not a creature was to be seen; on passing his door, she made a momentary pause, placing her hand on her hip, as a signal to me, and then went on, without looking behind her. I knocked, and asked for "Monsieur," but he was not at home. Upon inquiring for "Madame," she appeared; I told her that my business was of such importance, as absolutely to require my seeing "Monsieur son epoux;" and, if she would permit it, I wished to wait his return. She politely shewed me into an apartment, but seeing it to be a public waiting-room, and being desirous of privacy, I made one or two observations

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The Author entering the Gate of Bruges, preceded by Madame Derikre.

remotely bearing upon the purport of my visit; when, finding she entertained no suspicion of who I was, I ventured to congratulate her upon the success her husband had met with respecting Mansell; "Manselle," she emphatically exclaimed, starting with surprise, and fixing her large black eyes upon me. On my bowing most respectfully, and repeating—"Oui Manselle, Madame, I learn that by your husband's kindness, he is restored to the bosom of his family;" she, evidently much agitated, asked if my name was "Boiçe;" on my replying, "Yes, Madame, I am that unfortunate wanderer," she seized me by the hand, and immediately conducted me to the attics. I happily succeeded in interesting her in my behalf, by so detailing my sufferings and disappointments, that she remained for some time immersed in tears, every now and then exclaiming, with genuine sensibility, "Pauvre enfant; pauvre malheureux." Finding now, that I had gained another friend, whose influence with her husband was of some importance, I endeavoured to confirm

her in the interest she felt for me, by holding forth the pecuniary advantages to be reaped by assisting us, and represented the attendant risk as too trifling to have any weight with so generous a mind as that of her husband. After some inquiries about Mansell, she left me to my reflections; and, although I was not without apprehension, from Moitier's having so frequently broken his word with Madame Derikre respecting us; yet I was, nevertheless determined, that something decisive should be the result of my trip. At the expiration of half an hour, Moitier introduced himself, and commenced the conversation with relating difficulties innumerable; he represented the chance of detection in favouring the escape of prisoners, greater with him than other people, as he was under the particular "surveillance" of the police; so much so, that his very footsteps were watched; and, that my presence in his house, if discovered, would be the cause of the confiscation of all his property, for which it was impossible I could make any adequate compensation.

Suspecting that these difficulties were started to draw from me an offer, and also to enhance the value of his intended services, I came immediately to the point, and proposed his putting us into some place of temporary security, under cover, until he could cause us to be landed in England, for which, I offered him one hundred and fifty pounds, in bills, payable on demand. He replied, that he had been put to considerable expense on account of Mansell, had not yet received a stiver, and had trusted solely to his honour; that if he now undertook this affair, "et que tout manquoit," he should be ruined; and that, therefore, however willing he might be to serve us, he was necessarily obliged to decline having any thing to do with it. He questioned me about Mansell; when I convinced him of the respectability of his connexions, and that his bills would be honoured, he appeared to waver; by this, I concluded, he had no objection to the undertaking, provided he was certain of payment; but, as I had no means of giving security, I endeavoured to excite

his confidence, and proposed various plans; none of which seeming to please him, I requested he would leave me to myself for a few minutes, and I would, in the interim, turn over in my mind, other schemes; he consented, and left me. My object for requesting this suspension of the negotiation, was, to send him to his wife, whom I had been informed, by Madame Derikre, he always consulted upon any important matter, and, as she had appeared disposed to be friendly towards me, it was a "ruse" I thought worth the experiment. In about half an hour, Madame Moitier brought me up some coffee, gave me no hopes of her husband's assistance, but told me kindly, that I should remain there till the evening. I thanked her, and again endeavoured to work upon her feelings, by highly colouring our sufferings, and impressively representing the extreme distress to which we were reduced, by her husband's refusal to assist us: she excused him, by pleading his poverty, and the risk of ruin; this I treated as very improbable, enlarging with emphasis, on the paramount duty of an affectionate

mother, to encourage her husband to lay up in store for his children, and that to decline so favourable an opportunity as the present, was to do *them* an injury. To every thing I said, she listened with apparent interest, and, promising to do all she could for me, retired. Soon after, Moitier came up, with "bien fâché, vraiment chagriné, même au desespoir." Until this moment I never doubted his intention to further our views, and had flattered myself, that, although he might not choose to take an open, and active part, still he would prove the moving power, and that reaching his house in safety, would prove the way to final success; nevertheless, I persevered, as if I doubted not, attributing our detention in this neighbourhood to the hopes his promises had excited. He assigned very cogent reasons for declining his aid, though he frankly admitted the proffered remuneration to be most liberal; but the dread of banishment from the district, as cutting off his professional resources, he being "Notaire publique," seemed to outweigh the temptation. He,

however, listened with intense interest to the recital of our adventures; when I seized the opportunity of appealing to his common sense, whether it was probable that officers, who had acted as we had done, throughout, could be so base, so inconsistent, as finally to tarnish British integrity, by refusing to fulfil the very engagement which had restored them to their country. Nevertheless, if it was more satisfactory to him, I added, I was willing that he should keep me as an hostage, and convey the other two to England; and when the money was paid, should procure me the means of following them. To this he objected, from the danger of concealing me in his house. I then proposed his placing me somewhere in the country, but he shrugged up his shoulders in reply, and paused, in seeming doubt. I asked if he would have any objection to go to Verdun with bills which I would give him, he might there inquire who we were, get some of them cashed, and be insured payment for the remainder. At this, his countenance appeared to brighten, he con-

sented to reconsider the matter, and retired. About two hours had elapsed in this state of harrassing uncertainty, when he came up again, and declared it was utterly impossible he could secrete three, but would not object to take me into his house, provided I had no intercourse with the others. At this proposal, a sudden glow of indignation flushed through my veins, which, for the moment, sealed my lips, and excited an inclination to turn my back upon him, and stalk out of the house; but, on reflection, I suspected it a mere "finesse," to see if I was infamous enough to forsake my companions, and, therefore, with some warmth declared, that, however disastrous our continuing together might prove, it was my unalterable determination to share their fate,—with them to be restored to our country, or, with them to be enchained in the dungeons of the enemy. Despairing of bringing him to any decision, I requested the loan of a few louis, to enable us to purchase shoes, and other necessaries for a long journey, as we intended to march

through France and Germany to Trieste, and get home by the Mediterranean. For a moment he gazed with astonishment, and then exclaimed—" Mon Dieu! quelle persévérance." After some further conversation, he desired me not hastily to depart, but to return to the woods, and there wait a few days; he would then be able to say positively, whether he could assist us or not; at any rate, he would then lend us some money. As for that, I replied, with an air of indifference, he was as well able to lend us money now, as he would be a week hence, and that, if he refused, I should, in the evening, join my comrades, and immediately proceed on our journey. I saw that this kind of " hauteur," became necessary; for it was evident his object was to gain time, in order to ascertain the validity of Mansell's bills, and, satisfied on that head, he did not intend letting so good a speculation escape. I therefore requested, in a tone of respectful firmness, a decided answer; this he declined, and left me.

Many reasons may be assigned for this man's conduct; but, it is probable, the

prevailing one was, that he thought to make a greater profit by thus embarking us in detail; it was, however, sufficient to exonerate Mansell, in my mind, from any suspicion which might have existed, of his not having done all that he could for us. About two o'clock, Moitier returned, introducing Auguste Crens Neirinks. After some little preamble, it was agreed, that this Flemish "Chevalier d' industrie" should find us a place of concealment; Moitier was to go to Verdun, with my bills, to my friend Wills, who, I knew, would risk his all to serve me; and, on his return, to hire, or purchase, a boat for us. The success of my trip being thus complete, the next step was to communicate it to Whitehurst and Hunter, and get them into town in safety. Madame Derikre, whom anxiety to learn the result of the interview had detained in a neighbouring public-house, was now despatched with these auspicious tidings. On her arrival, she sent her son into the woods, to bring its forlorn inmates to Bruges, where they arrived, just before the shutting of the gates, and were conducted

by her to the attics of a small uninhabited house, in a back street; here I rejoined them after dark. The pleasure one derives from success in any laudable undertaking, generally increases with reflection; and, in due proportion to the importance of the event. On this occasion, my delight was great indeed; and, if any thing could heighten my enjoyment, it was the gratitude my comrades expressed for my exertions, in bringing them to this place of security, and for the promising prospects that now opened upon us. In order to prevent any suspicion which might arise from intercourse with a house, supposed to be uninhabited, a poor friend of the owner, was put in to occupy the front rooms. The furniture of our apartment, consisted of a table, four chairs, and a stump bedstead, filled with clean dry straw; this, compared to the sticks, in the dirty wet "trou," was a luxury only to be appreciated by those, who have experienced similar vicissitudes.

During the absence of Moitier, Neirinks and his brother frequently visited us, and

sent provisions by our fellow lodger. It was not until the 10th of April, that we were certain of Moitier's departure for Verdun. At this time, Neirinks introduced me to his family, consisting of an elderly mother, and her daughters, Mary and Pauline, with whom I frequently passed the evening, exciting the commiseration of these kind-hearted girls, by the relation of my adventures. Moitier being now gone with dispatches to Wills, and not likely to return for ten days, it occurred to me, that I might make an effort in the interval, to release Moyses, who, it will be recollected, was at Givet. Although, at first sight, the idea may appear a mere flight of the imagination, it led to such delightful reflections, and so much in harmony with my feelings towards him, that I indulged in them almost without intermission the whole day, and when Neirinks came in the evening, I mentioned it to him; but, finding he did not enter into the spirit of the enterprize, with a zeal promising success, I thought of going alone, and consulted Whitehurst and Hun-

ter, in order the better to digest my plans; but they were averse to it, from friendship to me, and, from the consideration of the numerous obstacles, I should have to overcome. There was no doubt, truth and prudence in their observations; nevertheless, I resolved not to give it up; accordingly, I again mentioned it to Neirinks, who, doubting how to act, yet desirous of gaining our confidence, now consented to assist me with the loan of his pocket book, together with certificates and passport; provided, that in the event of my being taken, I declared I had found them in a certain road. This, however, was not all that was necessary, for money and clothes were wanting; at length, so many difficulties arose, that I feared success was impossible, still, as the plan I had laid down, though fraught with danger, afforded a chance, I felt that my friend was entitled to it; knowing, that if he were similarly situated, he would not hesitate a moment in risking his liberty, and even his life, to rescue me. Indeed, so much was my mind occupied by these

thoughts, and so much were my spirits exhilirated by this pleasing hope, that I worked myself into a belief,, that an opportunity of proving my friendship now presented itself, in order to put its sincerity to the test. With this conviction, all hesitation vanished, and spurning impediments, I determined on the attempt, " coute qui coute." At length, Neirinks, seeing I was not to be averted from the project, resolved to display a degree of " bravoure" on his " début" in this new speculation, and boldly consented to accompany me; as well as to furnish a little cash, clothes, &c. My plan was, to proceed to Brussels, there to procure a " cabriolet," and go on to Givet; leave them in the suburbs, and walk to the house of my old friend Lawmont, a surgeon in the navy, with my face bound up, under pretence of consulting him for the tooth ache; then smuggle a note into the prison to Moyses, desiring him to obtain leave to get into town, under pretence of marketing; and, being escorted by an armed gen d'arme, he, of course, would not be

on parole. Moyses was to endeavour to intoxicate, or, in any way, evade the guard, for which purpose, he was to select one not averse to the juice of the grape. It may be necessary to explain, that it was a common custom in all the depôts of punishment when, any one, of the rank of midshipman, wished to go into town, to purchase provisions, or for other purposes, for him to be always accompanied by a gen d'arme, who expected his fee, the amount of which, generally influenced him in the length of time he remained. Although this was supposed to be done in secret, it was always connived at by the commandant, who, probably, had his portion of it. Succeeding thus far, Moyses was to get out of the town the best way he could, and join us in the suburbs; when we should immediately drive off for Brussels. At this place, a false passport was to be ready for him, to proceed and join the inhabitants of the garret. In the event of being pursued, we were to desert the cabriolet, fly to the woods, and travel to Bruges, by night: or, if it should appear

that Moyses could suggest any plan more feasible, I was ready to adopt it. Neirinks having entrusted the secret of our intended enterprise to his sister Mary, a lass about eighteen, she sounded me on the subject, offering to go with us, as far as Brussels, and there wait our return. I need not describe the astonishment this proposal excited, but, it was not for me to question its propriety. I was, however, resolved her mother's consent should be first obtained, and I saw her for that purpose in the evening; when it was arranged, that we should travel as brother and sister, and Neirinks, as a wine-merchant. He gave me his pocket book, and I studied his signature, which I could soon execute "à merveille;" for, it may be proper to state, that in the examination of a traveller, when any doubt, as to identity arises, he is ordered to sign his name, and it is compared with the one in the passport; if they correspond, the gens d'armes seldom say more than "cela suffit," and he proceeds. On the evening of the 14th of April, Neirinks, the young lady, and myself, in high

spirits, took leave of our friends, and embarked in the night passage-boat, by the canal, to Ghent; where we arrived the next morning, about nine, without meeting with any unpleasant occurrence. I took but little notice of my sister, there being several passengers in the boat who knew her. After our baggage was inspected, we took up our quarters in a tavern, in one of the squares, and sent our passports to the "municipalité," to be examined, and countersigned. Neirinks having received orders from Moitier, to go to Antwerp and Flushing, to see, if Peter, the smuggler, had returned from taking Mansell to England, I directed him to make himself acquainted with the state and number of the vessels of war, in those parts; also, with all the military strength in the neighbourhood; and he proved himself most discreet and indefatigable in obtaining this information. After Neirinks' departure, Mademoiselle and I amused ourselves by walking about the town, and visiting the fair. In this singular situation, I passed one of my pleasantest days during my

stay on the continent. To be accompanied and protected by an amiable and innocent little girl, rendered doubly engaging, by the deep interest she manifested in my fate; to be thus escorted through a hostile town, where, if known, I should have been chained by the neck, and cast into its darkest dungeon; to be accosted with the appellation of "frère," imperceptibly growing into "mon cher frère;" ("Honi soit qui mal y pense")—was, indeed, an interesting novelty—a change of circumstances, which could not fail to excite the most lively feelings of gratitude and esteem, and which I shall ever think and speak of with the most pleasing recollections. I felt myself bound to be particularly circumspect in my deportment. It was necessary to maintain a certain degree of easy vivacity, without being too forward; for this might have been considered as taking advantage of the confidence reposed in me; whilst, being reserved, would have appeared cold and insensible to the value of her protection. In one of our promenades, during the two days we were at Ghent, we met

about twenty prisoners, chained to each other by the neck, and escorted by four horse gens d'armes; instead of turning down a cross street to avoid them, we walked boldly past, to the great amusement of my sister, of whose firmness of mind I cannot speak too highly.

Neirinks rejoined us on the third day with some important information, and assured us, that the vigilant manner in which the patroles performed their duty, communicating hourly, along the whole line of coast, would render our embarkation extremely hazardous; this, however, was only a reason to be the more prudent. On the 17th, we proceeded, by the "diligence," to Brussels, where the same routine of sending our passports to the police-office, was necessary, to insure our safety. We escorted the lady to her aunt's, and retired to a public house, where our conversation was generally upon the subject of wine, for fear of being overheard, knowing that such places swarmed with spies. I went to the park, hoping to meet with an old Verdun acquaintance, named Hinds, re-

siding here, through whom I expected to recruit my finances, and, in whose friendship and secresy, confidence might be placed; but without finding him. Neirinks and I then visited his aunt, to whom I was introduced as his brother "Jean," who had been absent many years; of this, however, the loquacious and merry old lady was not to be persuaded, and accused me of being the lover of her neice, for which, added she, you are the more welcome. Still passing by the name of "Jean," her daughter, if I mistake not, named Julie, an interesting young lady, about nineteen, received and embraced me as her long-lost cousin. The next day, I again visited the park; and, still missing Hinds, went to inquire at an adjoining hotel, when, to my surprise, I almost ran against a lieutenant of gen d'armerie, standing at the door; I, however, strolled in, as if unconcerned, gently bending as I passed; but, gaining no intelligence, I returned to the park, when, at length, meeting Hinds, and bowing respectfully, I addressed him in French, for fear of observation. His

surprise was so great, that he appeared to doubt the evidence of his senses, knowing, that five months before, I had broken out of a prison, only eighteen leagues distant. We retired to his lodgings, where the leading occurrences, since my escape, and the cause of my visitiug Brussels, were briefly related. He seemed to suspect a hoax, and accused me of having some deep scheme in view, which I would not disclose, cautioning me against remaining any time in the town, as the police was very strict, and assisting me with the loan of a few pounds. On returning to Neirinks's aunt's, and entering the spacious drawing-room, I found the young ladies sitting "tête-à-tête," by a comfortable fire. As they arose when I drew near, I perceived a transparent drop trickling down the pale cheek of Julie, and something like confusion stealing over the evidently excited countenances of both; "quel fatal prèsent du ciel, qu'un cœur sensible." Fearing that my untimely intrusion was the cause of this perturbation, I gently bowed, and was in the act of retiring, when Mary

advanced, and modestly led me up to her cousin, who, with a graceful affability, presented her hand, faltering something quite unintelligible; nor could I divine the mystery of this scene, until she wished me a safe arrival in the bosom of my family. It being evident, by this observation, that she had been entrusted with the secret of my disguise, we drew very cosily round the fire, and I amused them with my history,

> " Wherein I spoke of most disastrous chances,
> Of moving accidents, by flood and field:"

which seemed to excite so lively an interest, that Julie entered into the spirit of the plot, with as much warmth and ardour as her cousin, and determined upon asking her mother's permission to return with us to Bruges; but it was not granted. The next day, Neirinks not appearing, I strutted about the town, with the ladies under my arm; visited all the fashionable promenades, and, in the evening, went to the theatre: towards the close of the performance, Neirinks came in; we escorted the

ladies home, and retired to our tavern. On the 21st, under the responsibility of our jovial old aunt, we hired a "cabriolet," left Brussels early for Charleroi, intending to take the cross road thence, to Charlemont,* that being, as we thought, less dangerous. Nothing remarkable occurred, but the occasional meeting of a gen d'arme, which had now become so common an event, that it gave me little concern; still, however, I could not help feeling a degree of anxiety at the first sight of two of these fellows, standing at the door of a public-house, where it was necessary that we should stop to bait the horse. Neirinks proposed going on, but as he knew of no other house on the road, it might have created suspicion; I therefore judged it more prudent to brave it out, fully confident in my own powers, should any question be asked, of cajoling them into the belief of our being wine-merchants. We drove up to the door,

* Charlemont, is a fortification, situated on the left bank of the Meuse, commanding the two towns of Givet, whither we were bound.

jumped out, and called for the "garçon d'écurie," with an air of importance, in imitation of that French dignity, with which travellers are not unacquainted, gave the necessary orders, and mounted up the steps to the door, the two gens d'armes opening, right and left, to make room. In passing, I saluted them with "Bon jour, Messieurs, peut on trouver à déjeûner ici," to which, reply was given in the affirmative; we walked in, and ordered breakfast: soon after, these fellows entered, and marched up, as if to question us; I forestalled them by an appropriate observation on the weather, and asking them if they had breakfasted, followed up this address with so rapid a succession of interrogatories, and remarks, as to lead them into conversation, and prevent their being too inquisitive: when, proposing we should all breakfast together, they were so completely diverted from their intention, that we sat down in a very friendly manner, and fared sumptuously, without any embarrassing inquiries. Having paid the host, we continued our route, arrived at

Charleroi, about seven in the evening, and supped with some countrymen, who informed us, the road to Charlemont was impassable for a " cabriolet," and that we should be obliged to go round by Namur. After a savoury regale upon fricandeau and garlic, I retired to a comfortable bed; but my mind was so wholly engrossed by the pleasing reflections of meeting, and delivering my friend from bondage, that I could scarcely close my eyes. The next morning, we set out for Namur, and arrived about noon. At three, we proceeded on our journey, intending to go no further that night than Dinant, about three leagues from Givet; so that the horse might be fresh on departing thence, with our prize. Just as we were approaching the southern gate, to our astonishment, and, I may add, confusion, we met Moitier, on his return from Verdun, who, no less surprised than ourselves at this unexpected " rencontre," demanded where we were going, adding, without giving us time to reply—" Follow me," and went into an adjoining hotel. On retiring into a private room, he gave me a

letter from Wills, containing a confirmation of every thing I had expected from so valuable a friend, and indeed, more; for he had entertained Moitier at his house for two days, treating him in the most handsome manner; got my bills cashed, and guaranteed payment of every engagement I should enter into with him. This letter also gave me information of Moyses having been sent from Givet to Bitche, distant about two hundred miles, for an offence similar to the one for which I was "cachoted" in Valenciennes: but I had been so anxiously brooding over his anticipated rescue, that this letter did not, at first, destroy all hope of prosecuting my plans, even to the very walls of this horrible bastille; but, when I calmly discussed the subject with Moitier and Neirinks, the impracticability of success became so evident, that I was compelled, although very reluctantly, to abandon the design. Moitier's vacillating, equivocal conduct, was now changed into a bold and steady determination to enter into the cause, with spirit and energy: in proof of which, he

offered to lend me any sum I chose to borrow. Leaving him to follow by the "diligence," Neirinks and myself immediately departed for Brussels, but did not arrive until late that night. Here we remained during the 23rd, not anxious to hurry back, knowing that we should be at Bruges before Moitier. This day was passed at *my aunt's;* the next, Neirinks, *my sister*, and myself bade adieu to the family, and took the "diligence," to Ghent, where, on the following morning, we were joined by Moitier, who, in the afternoon, left us for Flushing, in order to make arrangements with Peter. The next morning, we embarked in the canal boat for Bruges, and arriving there after a pleasant day's journey, waited at the very public-house I had visited with my companions on the night of the 22nd of November, until (it being then after hours), the porter had taken our names to the Commandant, with the request, that the gates might be opened—little could he imagine, that this application was, in part, made for an absconding English midshipman. After conduct-

ing *my sister* home, I rejoined my friends in the garret, who were much elated at my return; for, from my long absence, they were apprehensive I had been taken. The relation of the various events which had occurred since our separation, afforded matter of amusement during the next day, though it was not without its alloy, arising from the failure of the expedition. Soon after my return, I was introduced to a Mr. Edwards, an Englishman, residing in Bruges. I have since learnt, that it was this gentleman, who put Moitier in the right way of sending Mansell to England: indeed, the imminent risk Mr. Edwards ran, in receiving Whitehurst and Hunter at his house, at all seasonable hours during my absence, to share his scanty meal, when they were literally starving, without even a hope of recompense, but that of our gratitude, and the pleasure derived from the performance of a benevolent act, cannot be spoken of but with the warmest feelings of esteem. In hourly expectation of Moitier's arrival from Flushing, with orders to depart, we waited till the 28th,

when Neirinks brought word, that the guide would be in attendance the following day. Since my return, I passed the evenings with his family, entertaining his old mother with various tales, having, by this time, with the aid of my fair friends, acquired sufficient knowledge of the Flemish language, to make myself understood; the old lady could only speak her native tongue. From the account her daughter had given of our adventures, she evidently felt pleased with my attention. I have already mentioned the agreement I had made with Moitier; but, on his return from Flushing, he declared that Peter, from the imminent risk he had run in his late trip, would not undertake to carry us across the channel, under £80; that he, Moitier, had calculated on paying him only £40: Peter was to receive one-half on landing in England, and a note of hand was to be left with Moitier, for the other. The £80 were paid; but, I have since learned from Neirinks, that this story was a fabrication of Moitier's, who pocketed the additional £40. The hour

of departure now drawing near, I sent my adieu to Madame Derikre, repeating my assurance of the faithful discharge of her bills, which, with the cash she had already received, amounted to about £80, besides what Mansell might have given her. To Madame Moitier also, I conveyed the expression of my best thanks, for all her attentions, assuring her, that although, in all probability, I should never see her again, yet, the recollection of the first reception I had met with from her, would ever excite my most heartfelt gratitude; and, that the manner in which her husband should be remunerated, would prove that she was not deceived, in the favourable opinion she had entertained of the honour of British officers. On the 29th, soon after sunset, I visited Nerinks's family, expressed my acknowledgment of their kindness, more particularly to "ma chère sœur;" embraced them, and departed. Having rejoined my comrades, just at the close of the evening, we made ourselves as much like Flemings as possible, and stole out of the garret, singly, following each

other at about fifty paces distance, conducted by Neirinks. Our almost only danger now, was in escaping the observation of the guard, at the gates; but as, at this time, many people were passing and repassing, we mingled with the crowd, and, unnoticed, joined the guide, who was waiting in the vicinity. Our joy was now great indeed, almost equal to that experienced when we found ourselves in the ditch, after descending the last rampart at Valenciennes. It had been previously arranged, that Neirinks should accompany us to England, to receive the stipulated reward. Attended by him we marched in pairs, by woods and cross roads, towards the island of Cadsand, opposite to Flushing, till about one, A.M. expecting immediately to embark. On arriving near the coast, we met Peter's wife, who ordered us to lie down on the ground, whilst this Amazonian chief reconnoitred the strand. She had scarcely proceeded a hundred yards, when she was hailed, and saluted with a shot: like a skilful general, she ininstantly made good her retreat, and

bivouac'd with the main body. In this position, we remained for about two hours, whilst Peter, and his chief were occasionally watching the motions of the enemy, and looking out for the private signal from the boat. Our anxiety was now at its utmost stretch, and every passing moment appeared an age. The look-out, every now and then, was obliged to retreat, to avoid the patroles; although, had the boat arrived, being well armed, amidst irregular sand hills, and the spirits inflamed by confidence, our object could not have been defeated easily, or with impunity. The boat not coming, we were obliged to retreat to Peter's hut, for concealment. This habitation had but one room; a few loose boards lying across from side to side upon mud walls, which supported a straw roof, formed a kind of ceiling to about one half of it: on these boards were spread some dry rushes, upon which we reposed. In this situation, day after day closed, whilst we expected each succeeding one to be the last in this country; but no appearance of the boat,—

and, as no exertions on our part could expedite its arrival, we did not quit the loft. At length, on the 8th of May, positive information was brought, that all would be in readiness at ten P. M.; accordingly, at that hour, the weather fine, and the night dark, we assembled in the sand hills, and so soon as the patrole had passed, the private signal was made and answered. The boat gliding silently to the beach, with muffled oars, we rushed in with the rapidity of thought, and, in an instant, were all safe afloat; each seized an oar, and, vigorously applying his utmost strength, we soon reached beyond the range of shot.

It were vain to attempt a faithful description of our feelings at this momentous crisis; the lapse of a few minutes had wrought such a change of extremes, that I doubt, if amidst a confusion of senses, we could immediately divest ourselves of the apprehensions, which constant habit had engrafted on the mind; nor, indeed, could we relinquish the oar, but continued at this laborious, though now delightful, occupation, almost without intermission

the whole night. When day dawned, the breeze freshened from the eastward, and as the sun began to diffuse his cheering rays, the wide expanse of liberty opened around us, and the distant rear—the afflicted land of misery and bondage, was beheld with feelings of gratitude and triumph. No other object intercepted the boundless prospect, save a solitary gun-brig, which was soon approached: naturally anxious to proceed with despatch, we passed on, and, unobserved, reached a considerable distance, when a boat was discovered making towards us; being in no fear of Frenchmen thus venturing so far from land, we hove too; and, having made the officer acquainted with the circumstances of our embarkation and destination, again spread the canvas, and made rapid progress to the N. W. About noon, the wind still increasing, and the sea rising, it was deemed prudent to close reef the sail. While thus delightfully scudding before the foaming billows, which occasionally broke, as if to overwhelm our little boat, only fifteen feet in length, each eye was

steadily fixed a-head, anxious to be the first to announce land. It was not, however, till towards three P.M. that the white cliffs were seen. Although our situation was already replete with "joy and gladness;" still, the first sight of our native shore, after so long an absence, coupled with the recollection of conquered difficulties, excited increased happiness; affording ample compensation for past sufferings, though not without a pleasing hope, that promotion would be their reward.

On falling in with a fishing smack, at the back of the Goodwin Sands, the master welcomed us on board, and taking the boat in tow, ran for Ramsgate. On entering the harbour at five o'clock, I landed with such ineffable emotions of joy, and gratitude to that Almighty Disposer of events, who had vouchsafed to support and protect us through a constant succession of dangers and sufferings, during a period of nearly six months, and who, in his infinite mercy, had permitted our exertions to be finally crowned with success;

that, with a heart throbbing almost to suffocation, regardless of the numerous spectators, I fell down, and kissed, with rapture, the blessed land of liberty.

After a short conversation with the harbour master, to our surprise and disappointment, we found that foreigners were not allowed to land here, but were ordered to Dover; although convinced that they were in perfect safety, we felt it a point of honour, not to have even the appearance of deserting those, to whom we were indebted for the happiness we now enjoyed: though the impatience to embrace our long-lost families, (mine only eight miles distant), may be more easily conceived than expressed. We therefore determined to accompany, and see them comfortably placed in a public house. To this end, I returned to the smack, the master of which agreed to run us down. Before making sail, I wrote a note to one of my brothers, residing at Margate, apprizing him of my arrival, that he might communicate it to my family. We reached Dover about eight P.M., but not being permitted to

land after dark, slept on board. At daylight, of the 10th of May, having taken the foreigners to the Custom-house, thence to a public-house, and ordered them whatever they desired, we took chaises and departed for Betshanger, the residence of my father.

Mansell, on his return to England, anxious to bear glad tidings to my family, called at Betshanger, and, injudiciously, assured a younger sister, whom he happened to find alone, that "we should be either dead, or in England, in three weeks, as we had vowed not to be taken alive." Many months having elapsed since any letters from France had reached home, my parents received this information with mingled feelings of joy and fear, and, immediately set on foot every method ingenuity and affection could devise, to render assistance through the smugglers. As the time of the stipulated return drew to a close, so did parental fear and anxiety proportionably increase, till, at the expiration of six long weeks, hope itself sickened; still no returning child—no possibility of

affording relief, nor of learning his fate; their minds agitated too with the consciousness, that if not already numbered with the dead, he must still be wandering through dreary woods, exposed to the severest sufferings, and "every man his foe;" these were indeed heart-rending reflections, sufficient to harrow up the feelings, and tincture every thought with inconsoleable grief. It was in the plenitude of these feelings, at the day's first dawn, for

> "————Nature's soft nurse,
> Had fled their pillow:"

when they were endeavouring to afford mutual consolation, and actually discussing the propriety of family mourning, that my brother burst upon their deep, yet pious sorrow, with news of our safety and arrival.

The effect which this sudden information must have had upon the best of parents—parents alone can judge; suffice it to say, they were not unmindful that their prayers were heard by Him, "who is able to save."

On the road from Dover, at a moment

when my attention was directed towards a neighbouring village, in search of the roof under which I had received the first impressions of discipline, Neirinks, whom I had taken with me, and who was admiring every thing he saw, as "magnifique," suddenly exclaimed—"Regardez ce vénérable dans cette belle voiture," when I immediately recognized my father; we joined, and speedily drove to Betshanger, where a scene awaited me, that I had little anticipated; but, as I do not intend to intrude upon the public, what more properly belongs to private detail, let the imagination of the reader depict to himself this family meeting. Nevertheless, as these pages may probably fall into the hands of some, who may be desirous of knowing what became of the foreigners, and how we were all finally disposed of, I shall add, that Neirinks remained at Betshanger, until the return of the boat on the 17th, which being put on board a gun-brig, by order of Commodore (now Admiral Sir Edward) Owen, was sent, together with the foreigners, off Flushing.

With the money they received, and which they considered amply sufficient to recompense them for their services, they had previously purchased a quantity of indigo and coffee, which yielded them a profit of about 600 per cent.; we had, therefore, not only the satisfaction of knowing that they were content with the result of their present trip, but that it would be an inducement for them to afford every assistance in their power to any of our countrymen, who might, at a future period, escape from confinement, and reach that part of the coast. Our own expenses amounted to £135 each. Hunter was soon afterwards employed, and promoted in 1811. Whitehurst was sent to the Halifax station, where he had not been long before he was again made prisoner in the "Junon," and detained in France during the remainder of the war. Mansell, a short time after, died at sea. The day after my arrival, I proceeded to London, and had the honour of an audience of Lord Mulgrave, then first Lord of the Admiralty; a few days subsequent to which, his lordship was pleased to issue an order for my

examination, without waiting the usual period fixed for that purpose, and then immediately appointed me lieutenant of the Arachne; this particular mark of his lordship's approbation, in thus dispensing, in my favour, with the customary regulations observed on such occasions, made an impression on my mind not to be effaced. In June, Captain Chambers joined, and the brig, when ready for sea, was ordered to Flushing, where I met my old friend Peter the smuggler, he gave me a letter from Rickets, Rochford, and Robinson, whom I had left at Valenciennes, and who, having lately escaped thence, were then lying concealed in the neighbourhood of the "Cat." The contents of the letter, through the channel of my worthy captain, were communicated to Sir Richard J. Strachan, the commander-in-chief, who directed him to give me a written order to adopt such measures as I should judge prudent for their delivery; this order was given, to prove, in the event of my being made prisoner in the attempt, that I was no spy. In consequence of the capture of the island

of Walcheren, which had taken place since my departure from this coast, it was reasonable to suppose that the vigilance of the enemy had considerably increased, and it therefore became indispensably necessary that the greatest circumspection should be observed in my proceedings. I accordingly consulted Rickets' father, then in the Theseus, and in one of the boats of that ship, most ably manned with a crew of the Bas Roads *fire eaters*, made sail with Peter. On approaching the main, about midnight, we struck the mast, pulled in with muffled oars, and silently landed him, unobserved by the patroles, on the very spot whence I had embarked on the 8th of May, notwithstanding the enemy in the interim had erected a two-gun battery but a few yards distant; we shoved gently out, and came to a grapnel, waiting his return with the fugitives; but they not appearing, at dawn of day we returned to the Theseus. This trip was repeated four other nights without success; no signal being made. On the sixth day the Arachne was ordered to sea, and I was thereby most unwillingly obliged

to relinquish the heart-felt satisfaction I had anticipated, in being the deliverer of those very friends who had assisted me in my escape from the citadel of Valenciennes. Happily, however, they did not suffer from my absence, for the same night, my place was supplied by Lieutenant Edger, of the Theseus, who, although a stranger to the parties, nobly volunteered his services on the occasion. He being made acquainted with my plans, proceeded to the same spot; about ten P. M. the private signal was made, he pulled in, in an instant the fugitives rushed into the boat, and shortly after were happily restored to their families and friends.

FINIS.

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WORKS

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